Postwar Figures of *L'Ephémère*

Yves Bonnefoy, Louis-René de Forêts, Jacques Dupin, André du Bouchet

JAMES PETTERSON

In *Postwar Figures of* L'Ephémère, James Petterson argues that the postwar poets of *L'Ephémère*, Yves Bonnefoy, Louis-René de Forêts, Jacques Dupin, and André du Bouchet, answer Surrealism's interwar question: can we imagine a "society without a social myth?" Petterson suggests that Yves Bonnefoy reconsiders myth in French poetry following World War II in terms of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot's refutation of the possibility of participating in a mythological world experience and of the possibility that poetry can be the voice of authentic being or death. Bonnefoy questions the authenticity of death in poetry in terms of Blanchot's notion that in poetry death is not solely the expression of being and otherness, but also of their antithesis: the reiteration of the same. Petterson also demonstrates how Bonnefoy rejects totalizing Romantic syntheses of poetry and society by distinguishing between the false discourse of nothingness and the "true poetic discourse" of finite "absence," and how his later poetry is critical of a Mallarmean nostalgia for a lost constellation or cosmology of transcendent meaning.

In chapter 2 Petterson suggests that by blurring the distinction between *logos* and *mythos* Louis-René de Forêts's writings evoke a "poetic narrative" that invents a

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James Petterson

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To Anja and Adrian

I do not believe that there are buried and repressed layers of notions, perceptions, realities, or truths beneath apparent reality. I believe that everything, including what is essential, has always been out in the open and on the surface, and that it was destroyed mainly because man neither knew how nor wished to maintain it. That is all.

—Antonin Artaud to André Breton (1947)

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Introduction

THE FOLLOWING STUDY TRACES THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW LANDscape for poetry in France in the wake of World War II and in a cultural and historical context in which the aspirations of French poets were altogether different from those of prewar generations. In 1942, in his "Prologomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non," André Breton summed up the persistent prewar inquiry of surrealism and surrealist poetry into the twentieth-century role of myth, revolution, and the sacred with the following brief, historically concise question: "What should one think of the postulate 'there is no society without a social myth'? In what measure can we choose or adopt and *impose* a myth that fosters the society that we judge to be desirable?"[1] Breton's postulate regarding the mutual dependence of myth and society addresses one of the major concerns of pre-World War II French thought and poetry. It is equally central to the postwar poetry of Yves Bonnefoy, Louis-René des Forêts, Jacques Dupin, and André du Bouchet, the poet-editors of the journal *L'Ephémère* (1966–72), who began publishing in what Jacques Dupin named the "desert" of postwar France: "For those of us who were just opening our eyes, just beginning to write, the 1950s were a desert."[2] Seven years following Tristan Tzara's 1918 declaration that Dada was born of disgust, "of a need for independence, and of distrust of community,"[3] André Breton echoed Dada's provocation by suggesting that surrealism as well was no longer interested in "poetic form."[4] Jacques Dupin's evocation of a postwar "desert" suggests that, by the time his generation had begun to write, instead of opting for ideologically rejecting culture and poetic tradition, the cultural slate already had been wiped clean. The question after World War II had become whether and how to begin anew, rather than how to reject literary or cultural traditions.

Symptomatically, critical interpretations of the postwar poetic

tradition in France fall into two camps. On the one hand, World War II provokes no rupture in French cultural traditions; on the other, it radically disrupts these traditions. The impact of World War II on French poetry is nowhere more clearly and polemically ventured than in the 1956 *Anthologie de la poésie nouvelle*, which Jean Paris prefaced with the following remarks: "By taking into account the catastrophe [of World War II], poetry also condemns itself to beginning with its own death. Ceaselessly, through innumerable risks and ruses, poetry will have to begin again from the nothingness to which it has been led by history."[5] For Jean Paris, World War II marked a momentous event that radically changed the course of French poetry. Writing both prior to and following World War II, poets such as Pierre Reverdy (1889–1960) and René Char (1907–1988) also rejected the notion of a seamless continuity in the French poetic tradition. In "Circonstances de la poésie" (1946), Reverdy claimed, for instance, that World War II required that the poet's voice be "in keeping, from now on, with the importance and gravity of the event it has just lived."[6] Reverdy thus suggested that the impasses arising from considering the impact of World War II on French poetry are both inherent and necessary to its continued existence. More often than not, however, the events of World War II are viewed as an inconvenient stumbling block in the attempt to trace the continuity of the French poetic tradition. In his preface to the anthology *La Poésie française depuis 1950*, Alain Bosquet suggested that "the defeat of 1940 and the Liberation did not fundamentally change French poetry."[7] Serge Brindeau defies his own title, *La Poésie contemporaine de la langue française depuis 1945*, to suggest: "Far from us is the pretension to highlight any discontinuity in the evolution of French poetry."[8] In the United States, the impact of World War II on poetry has been similarly dismissed. The 1992 anthology *Twentieth-Century French Avant-Garde Poetry, 1907–1990* suggests that "organization of the century into two parts fails to identify the rich and diverse nature of the genre and leads into all manners of impasses."[9] The double bind of the postwar French poetic tradition is that it can neither ignore the event of World War II nor embrace the apocalyptic portrayal of the landscape left in the wake of the war, blind to this perspective's share of rhetorical hyperbole.

Nor can the double bind of postwar poetry be explained away

by invoking the impossibility of poetry after World War II. More often than not, arguing that postwar poetry is impossible is a way of skirting the difficult issues facing not only poetry, but culture in general after the war. In 1944 T. W. Adorno affirmed: "The idea that after this war life will continue *normally* or even that culture might be *rebuilt*—as if the rebuilding of culture were not already its negation—is idiotic."[10] Yet the poets of *L'Ephémère* did write, perhaps for the simple reason that the "idiotic"—in the sense of personal and paracultural—temptation to write persisted, and had to be addressed from within its own *idiom*. In other words, the poets of *L'Ephémère* are not solely determined by their historical context, but also by their reaction thereto. In a comment that is relevant for all the poets of *L'Ephémère*, Yves Bonnefoy claimed that the Resistance poetry of World War II had been too historically constrained: "It seemed to me that these Resistance poems were poetry only to the extent that the event they sang was seized anew in all its symbolic potentiality, transformed into a universal, and that happened only very rarely."[11] Bonnefoy thus distinguished between circumstantial patriotism and a more subtly resistant form of poetry. For him the most forceful experience of World War II came not through subsequent narratives or histories, but through the impact of war as an unspeakable event: "The event of war itself, its brute reality, was far more important for me, from the perspective of poetic experience, than the interpretations that were being offered."[12] Some years later, in "La Poésie et la société contemporaine" (1988), Bonnefoy further emphasized poetry's difficult ties with history and society by suggesting that poetry "is not so much absent from the social question, as engaged in the study of this question in a way one could call radical."[13] For the poets of *L'Ephémère*, poetry's "social question" had to be addressed from its origins, in a "radical" or subterranean fashion, and from a place on which traditional narratives shed no light.

The early works of the poets of *L'Ephémère* were first given significant attention in 1964 by the French literary critic Jean-Pierre Richard, through his phenomenological readings of French poetry in *Onze études sur la poésie moderne*.[14] Ironically, warnings against the continued reception of postwar poetry through the intermediary of a vaguely Heideggerian phenomenology came years before Richard's essays. Adorno's "On Lyric Poetry and So-

ciety" (1957), for instance, had already criticized ontologizing readings of poetry such as Richard's by suggesting that language "should not be absolutized as the voice of Being as opposed to the lyric subject, as many of the current ontological theories of language would have it."[15] Surprisingly, readings of the later works of the poets of *L'Ephémère* continue to depend on Jean-Pierre Richard's persistent ontologizing interpretations of French poetry. This is not to say that Adorno has the last word; for his criticism also errs. It overlooks that absolutizing language (as the voice of Being) is a possible temptation for critic, poet, and language alike, and that this temptation cannot be rejected out of hand. The poets of *L'Ephémère* incorporate the desire to absolutize language to their writings, yet their works are reducible neither to Richard's ontologization of poetic language nor to Adorno's denunciation of the jargon of ontology: "language should not . . ."

Neither duped nor entirely disenchanted with the dream that poetry might conjure up André Breton's "desirable society," the poets of *L'Ephémère* attempt to envision and to develop something similar to what the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy calls "art without a Cosmos."[16] Rather than attempt to construct an art form deprived of the aspiration to evoke a new cosmology, the poets of *L'Ephémère* seek to determine the conditions of possibility of an art form detached from the desire (which this cosmology implies) for a monological, unified community. One might also say that the poets of *L'Ephémère* pursue what Paul Celan (coeditor of *L'Ephémère* until his suicide in 1970) called, in "Le Méridien," his acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner prize in 1960, "the impossible path of the Impossible."[17] They follow this impossible path, perhaps because it embodies poetry's twentieth-century destiny as an art form that, in the words of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "is what it is only through the impossibility of bringing about what establishes its authenticity."[18]

In light of Jacques Dupin's evocation of the cultural-historical "desert" of the 1950s, this study appraises the multiple solutions that the poets of *L'Ephémère* offer to the question André Breton had posed during the war years. It also warns against prematurely announcing the resurgence of postwar French poetry in terms of potentially antithetical theoretical perspectives, such as the call for a continued ontological and Heideggerian reading of

the French poetic tradition. According to the latter reading, not only does French postwar poetry supposedly illustrate a "progressive movement toward thought,"[19] it also offers a new foundation for a totalizing understanding of the world: "No longer finding a base among the physical sciences, the attempt to understand the world looks for another foundation in poetic experience."[20] The following chapters question the assumption that postwar French poetry represents an attempt to "refound" French culture, since it is not at all certain that World War II spelled culture's or poetry's end. From the perspective of this end, the poets of *L'Ephémère* have been portrayed as "ontological poets" championing modernism's final moments. As such, they are often pitted against the so-called avant-garde "poets of the signifier," the contributors to the journal *Tel quel* (1960–82).[21] In *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton* (1997), Suzanne Guerlac demonstrates, for instance, that the literary and theoretical impetus for many of the *Tel quel* participants lies in their reception of Georges Bataille's theory of transgression, yet she makes no mention of the poets of *L'Ephémère*.[22] Rather than being reserved to the writers affiliated with *Tel quel*, Bataille influenced a far vaster generation of postwar writers, including the poets of *L'Ephémère*. With regards to Bataille's review *Documents*, Yves Bonnefoy made the point forcefully in *Alberto Giacometti: Biographie d'une œuvre* (1991) that "no one who was a painter or poet in France, then or later, committed himself truly or durably to such an endeavor without recognizing that the ideas of *Documents* were profoundly related to the artist's own instinctive aspirations."[23] That said, the literary critical horizon of the poets of *L'Ephémère* is not limited to a reception of Georges Bataille. It is doubtless necessary, but certainly not sufficient, to consider the influence of Bataille's writings on the poets of *L'Ephémère*, since these poets are not only indebted to but also critical of numerous other prewar literary and intellectual movements.

The skepticism of the poets of *L'Ephémère* toward a limited literary-historical horizon is further informed by a careful reconsideration of the overly rapid reception of nineteenth-century French poetry by French intellectuals of the interwar period. In 1861 Baudelaire proposed a "critical poetry" to replace the writings of what he called those "pitiable" and "incomplete" poets

"who are guided solely by instinct."[24] In 1983, in a little-known essay entitled "A la recherche de la présence," Yves Bonnefoy suggested that any consideration of writing and poetry as an ontological project must recognize that "at the heart of writing, writing is questioned. In this absence, there is something like an obstinate voice."[25] I demonstrate that the "presence" invoked by the poets of *L'Ephémère* is not so much ontologically disclosed by the poem as it is "obstinately voiced" from within the writing of the poem. For instance, this obstinate voice is central to Louis-René des Forêts's work-in-progress *Ostinato*,[26] a series of short texts, neither prose nor poetry, that are close in conception to what Michel Leiris described in *Le Ruban au cou d'Olympia* (1981) as "poetic narrative."[27] Throughout *Ostinato*, writing is not conceived of as the inscription of circumstantial, historically determinable events. Nor is it an autobiographical work-in-progress, as des Forêts warned during an interview in 1984: "There is no chronology. I introduce it after the fact, for the sake of coherence. Each fragment corresponds to a new beginning, and I insist on pointing out that this beginning occurs only from within language, not from memory, as is usually the case with autobiographical writings."[28] For des Forêts, as for Bonnefoy, Dupin, and du Bouchet, the autobiographical self cannot be analytically extracted from the fabric of the text in order to be presented as an anterior autobiographical presence buried beneath subsequent script.

The poets of *L'Ephémère* neither conform to an intertextual model of literature that reduces autobiographical presence to the fleeting appearance of textual production (the voice as simulacrum), nor do they absolutely disavow an ontological hermeneutics of remembrance through which writing purportedly unveils a pretextual, autobiographical self. Between these two poles of writing the poets of *L'Ephémère* insinuate their way into historical narrative to rewrite chronologies (often ideologically informed chronologies) of the biographical subject. For Jacques Dupin, poetry expresses what he calls "anonymous paraphs,"[29] a form of writing that evokes an impersonal subject whose anonymity disrupts the social and historical structures of the authority (and authorship) that the use of paraphs implies. In *Des "Hauts-de-Bühl"* (1989), in homage to Michel Leiris, André du Bouchet suggested that the poem conveys the meaning of an event that has

yet to take place: "paroles porteuses chaque fois—aussi exhaustives qu'elles soient apparues—de ce qui n'est pas dit encore" [words each time bearers—as exhaustive as they might have appeared—of what is not yet said].[30] For the poets of *L'Ephémère*, writing is thus not the romantic presentation of an absolutely inconceivable thought. Writing reflects, rather, on its ability to pass for and to pass through such absolute presentations.

For all of their similarities, the voices of the poets of *L'Ephémère* are also distinct. Bonnefoy often alludes to poetry's prophecy as an "act of memory [that] is already a forward projection, through the present-day obscurity of history."[31] Louis-René des Forêts, on the other hand, suggests in *Ostinato* that the poetic self does not solely struggle with past events in order to prophetically prefigure the future. Rather, "through writing, the self is returned to an ignorance of itself in the blinding light of the present" (31). Similarly, André du Bouchet suggests that it would be "useless and even out of place" for contemporary poetry to pose as a "unique, sovereign language."[32] More bluntly still, for Jacques Dupin writing "yields nothing."[33]

Though distinct, the voices of the poets of *L'Ephémère* do express a new relation to language and to poetry, one that is reducible neither to historical circumstance nor to an overly narrow definition of French literary tradition. However appealing it might be to link them to historically imposing prewar intellectual movements, what becomes clear in the chapters that follow is that the influences behind these voices are far more varied, and equally striking. The poets of *L'Ephémère* thus do represent a literary movement through their own refusal to be restricted to any one particular lineage, and through their rejection of any one definition of their writings. They speak of and perhaps with the voice of the ephemeral, a voice that traces what Louis-René des Forêts, in *Ostinato*, has called "figures of chance" (15); a voice that, for André du Bouchet, utters "words of rupture"; a voice that "desists from its will-to-meaning" [son vouloir-dire]. In its *desistance*, the written word and its "desire for the eternal" is brought back to "the insolence of a breath that proffers . . . and vanishes."[34] The ephemeral, the finite, and all that fleetingly materializes in the text to destabilize a thought in the process of becoming eternal: poetry's critical relationship to these traits perhaps best defines the poets of *L'Ephémère*.

Postwar Figures of *L'Ephémère*

1

Yves Bonnefoy and the Absence of Myth

La nuit étoilée est la table de jeu sur laquelle l'être se joue.
—Georges Bataille

In his preface to the *Dictionnaire des mythologies et des religions des sociétés traditionnelles et du monde antique* (1981), Yves Bonnefoy suggests that poetry's use of what he called "personal myths" might well be the fable or the reinvention of philosophical dialectical reflection. According to Bonnefoy, "personal myths" belong to "a dialectic entirely different from those that unite human beings under the sign of their communications in the real world, of their confrontation with real necessities, and that are accompanied and made possible by rituals and beliefs."[1] Rather than being merely subordinate to ritual beliefs or philosophical discourse, this other dialectic, Bonnefoy suggests, needs to be understood in terms of poetry. Remarkably, the role of myth in Bonnefoy's poetry has been studied only at the level of enumerating its inclusions of mythological figures that are subsequently related to myths culled from antiquity and French medieval literature. In such readings mythological figures are emptied of their historical and critical content, and are reduced to the role of easily manipulated pieces in a stylistic puzzle whose randomness is eliminated or transformed into a game of *difficultés vaincues*. Such a procedure also reduces mythology to the fable's didactic function, draining it of the force "of cosmic drama" for the sake of a vulgarizing perpetuation of a given ideological formation of the world.[2] Yves Bonnefoy's poetry and essays express the necessity of going beyond such an overly reductive understanding of myths and mythology.

For Bonnefoy, the stakes of rethinking myth are not slight. They are bound to our ability to redefine the human community

itself. To this end, he proposes an active understanding of myth's structural role in our "desire for knowledge," and he also criticizes traditional analyses of myth that tend to overlook more marginal and more personal relationships to myth. Again, in his preface to the *Dictionnaire des mythologies*, Bonnefoy suggested that there might exist societies that "do not tend to integrate their myths into some meaningful whole, but leave them as fragments that flare up and then are extinguished without, in passing, casting any light on what we ourselves are tempted to look for or to find everywhere: the outline, if only a rough one, of the vault of a universe" (XI). Bonnefoy does not take myth to be a form of allegorical mythology assimilated and subordinated to philosophy. In the words of Jean-Pierre Vernant, in *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne*, such a form of myth "is naturalized with the status of a philosophy, and, by winning acceptance, becomes absorbed."[3] According to this model, myth is redefined as philosophy's infantile precursor and as "a preliminary sketch for rational discourse, to suggest that its fables are the vehicle for the initial stammering of the *logos*."[4] Bonnefoy's "personal myth" is not the equivalent of myth defined as a tendentious legendary or fablelike paradigm for a given people and its cosmogony. Nor is this "personal myth," once stripped of its ideological legendary veneer, presented as philosophy in its infancy. As Bonnefoy wrote in the *Dictionnaire des mythologies*: "if in these cases we can often see nothing but an incoherent babble opening the way to higher forms of consciousness, might it not also be possible for us to sense in them an entirely different mode of consciousness, one in which the discontinuous, the partial, the forever incomplete would themselves be perceived as the very being of human meaning?" (XI). Instead of reducing myth to the role of prefiguring the *logos* of philosophy, Bonnefoy proposes a nontotalizing mythology, which he defined as "an ontology of the superficiality of our inscription on the world—an ontology that the planet's recent history would tend to confirm rather than to deny—somewhere beyond the ruins of our own aspirations" (XI). Bonnefoy thus rereads the role of myth in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French poetry and culture to propose a myth that would be related to what he calls "recent historical events" (his periphrasis for World War II), and that would prove capable of redefining the human community. His poetry incorporates mythological structures and figures not only in order to overcome the conceptual impossibility of expressing the freedom of being(s), but also to critique the mythological structures and figures that actively deny poetry's ability to appeal to an alternative myth whose dialectic might be entirely different from allegorical and legendary models; one that might amount to little more than "fleeting traces on the gray wall of several modern day works" (XI).

Alphabetical circumstance dictated that Georges Bataille's brief enigmatic essay "L'Absence de mythe," published in the anthology *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (the vehicle for André Breton's desire for a new post-World War II surrealist movement) be followed by "Donner à vivre."[5] The latter was one of the first writings by the young surrealist poet, Yves Bonnefoy, who then read Bataille with the feeling that, in his words, "he spoke of the essential."[6] Drawing on the temptation of a collective poetry, partially inspired by the Resistance poets of World War II, and cautious both of what Jacques Dupin later called the overwhelming solidarism of Resistance poets ("le coude à coude de la Résistance")[7] and of the surrealist Benjamin Péret's acerbic denunciation of Resistance poetry in *Le Déshonneur des poètes* (1945), Bonnefoy joined the postwar surrealists. The movement appealed to his youthful desire for collective poetry, and to his hope for what he called the "revolution of the spirit."[8]

The coincidental proximity, during the immediate postwar period, between Georges Bataille and Yves Bonnefoy in Breton's anthology marked a turning point for the young poet. At the time, talk of collectivity and myth occupied every intellectual circle, without there ever quite being any agreement on just what collectivity and myth actually meant. In "Le Sens moral de la sociologie" (1946), Georges Bataille suggested that surrealism's interest in myth during the interwar period had focused on "the superiority of collective over individual creation, and thereby on Durkheimian sociology defining religious activity and myths as the manifestation of a collective being that is superior to the individual: society."[9] As we shall see, the stakes of myth in postwar France are as multiple as its definitions. This confusion defines the dispute between Breton and Bataille, and is equally central to Bonnefoy's own postwar poetry.

A few years prior to World War II, in "Limites non-frontières

du surréalisme" (1937), Breton proposed that the task of surrealism was to elaborate "the collective myth proper to our times."[10] This proposal was less due to Durkheim's influence, as Bataille had thought, than to surrealism's violent reaction to earlier nineteenth-century positivist analyses of the role of myth. In fact, the desire to invoke a collective myth arose neither solely from Breton's surrealism nor from Bataille's social anthropology. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, the popular notion of a collective myth, as the site of a collective unconscious defining any cultural, social, or national group, was perhaps even more common than objective philological considerations of myth. For the nineteenth-century French positivist philologist Ernest Renan, myth was "neither theology nor philosophy, neither science nor moral studies nor history," but a "vast word game."[11] For Charles Baudelaire, on the contrary, legend, myth, and fable were "like concentrations of national life, like deep reservoirs where the blood and the tears of a people slumber."[12] Similarly, in 1880, Stéphane Mallarmé stated that "great poets knew how (it was their duty as long as mankind had not created new myths) to vivify through inspiration and to rejuvenate through a modern vision the types of the Fable."[13]

On the eve of World War II, Georges Bataille's "L'Apprenti sorcier" (1938) approached Mallarmé's proposal from a different angle. He pointed to the need for "mythological invention," but he also distanced himself from André Breton's own preoccupation with myth. For Bataille, twentieth-century myths did not refer, "as a rudimentary notion would have it, to various obscure faculties of collective invention."[14] He unhesitatingly attributed this rudimentary understanding of myth to Breton, whom he also criticized for attributing a "paradigmatic value" to myth. For Bataille, the attempt to propose new myths as the paradigms of twentieth-century culture presupposed subordinating *mythos* to *logos* by investing these myths with a truth content that would define and condition political and social unity.[15] Bataille insisted that neither the individual nor society could or should revive and *impose* such new and paradigmatic myths since "the old dwelling of myth seems no less deserted than the *picturesque debris of temples*."[16] Twentieth-century understanding of myth was necessarily removed from its presupposed immediacy. Through being historicized and aestheticized, myth had lost its paradigmatic value, which Breton also had called its value as a form of "total existence," and for Bataille any twentieth-century attempt to appropriate myth could only pass through a historical and aesthetic filter that reduced myth to picturesque and deserted debris.

In 1937, one year prior to Bataille's "L'Apprenti sorcier," André Breton had declared man's right to a new myth. In 1942, during his wartime exile in the United States, he toned down his declaration to the tentative consideration of the implications of imposing a myth that might "foster the society that we judge to be desirable."[17] He no longer seemed so certain or so eager to dream of a poetically created "total existence," having sensed, perhaps, that the question was no longer whether or not myth was desirable, but whether one could still justifiably call for the creation of paradigmatic myths. Breton left his question unanswered; nor did he respond, following World War II, to Bataille's essay "L'Absence de mythe." Rather, he contented himself with the following linguistic shrug: "This is not the place to decide the thorny question of whether the *absence of myth* is still a myth, and if it should be considered the present-day myth."[18] In the years that followed, deciding this "thorny question" became one of the primary concerns of the poets of *L'Ephémère*. For his part, Breton embraced a less critical understanding of myth. For instance, in believing that the art works on display at the 1947 surrealist exhibition could act upon their viewers in a manner that would in "every way exceed the power of the work of art," he merely reiterated what Bataille called "the desire of founding cohesion on a myth."[19] Breton merely endorsed the creation of a pre-aesthetic version of myth, since he insisted that the "uplifting aspect of these works [le caractère *soulevant* de ces oeuvres] supports the idea that a *myth* emanates from them, and that it is simply up to us to define and coordinate it."[20]

Such was the unresolved status of myth that faced Bonnefoy in 1947, the year he published "Donner à vivre," in which he proclaimed that he intended to "combine the tasks of transforming the world and of changing life: through the use of imagination as an agent of lightning, and as a catalyst."[21] Clearly, the young Bonnefoy was attracted by surrealism's promise of revolution and of a new myth, and his early essays are thus indispensable to understanding the fifty-year span of his writings. As Bonnefoy

acknowledged in 1980, intimating that his early essays may have touched upon something he has never been able to deny or to entirely accept: "I still need to completely say, to expose in a way that would satisfy me, this idea of poetry I feel within me since 'L'Eclairage objectif' or 'Donner à vivre,' (very old pages marked by the vocabulary of an other, in this instance, Breton)."[22] Yves Bonnefoy in fact demonstrated his desire to fuse politics and poetry as early as 1946, in the first issue of his own surrealist journal entitled *La Révolution, la nuit*, in which he prefaced his "Traité du pianiste" with the following imperative from Marx: "Workers of all lands, unite!" and from Lautréamont: "Poetry should be made by all, not just by one."[23] By citing Marx and Lautréamont, Bonnefoy replayed surrealism's own failed synthesis of politics and poetry. He also demonstrated a penchant for the surrealism of the 1920s, which claimed not to be poetic form but an act capable of fundamentally destabilizing the fabric of society through what Albert Camus, in *L'Homme révolté* (1950), called the impossible reconciliation "of Marx's *let us transform the world* and Rimbaud's *let us change life*."[24]

"L'Eclairage objectif" (1946), published in Christian Dotremont's Belgian surrealist review *Les deux sœurs*, typifies Bonnefoy's early adherence to surrealism's interwar revolutionary aspirations by professing preference for the disruptive powers of Arthur Rimbaud's poetical alchemy. It also rejects what Bataille, in "La Volonté de l'impossible" (1945), snidely called "pretty poetry."[25] As Bonnefoy wrote, "the idea of culture is nonsense, it paralyzes knowledge, it renders useless those journeys of the mind, it transforms into a mirage those palaces [*sic*] at the bottom of a lake where we might have been able to live."[26] Bonnefoy's reference to "salons au fond du lac"[27] interprets Rimbaud's objective poetry as "real poetic terrorism." Bonnefoy thus also transformed the surrealist image into what, in "L'Eclairage objectif," he called "guns of dawn passed from hand to hand" (53). These guns replaced Breton's "revolvers,"[28] to which Bonnefoy added poetry's perpetual creation of bomb images supposedly able to ceaselessly contradict what he named the image's "theme": a form of master image threatening to recuperate individual poetic images into a thematic ideological archetype. As Bonnefoy wrote in "L'Eclairage objectif," these bomb images were to have been able "to ward off and shape its [the master

image's] face [visage] until the end" (52).[29] The violent prophetic tone of Bonnefoy's "L'Eclairage objectif" followed surrealism's own early belief in poetry's absolute revolutionary and liberating power—poetry as what Roger Caillois called a "pure warning."[30] Yet, as had the early surrealists, Bonnefoy overlooked the following: how does one achieve any closure whatsoever, how does one reach the poem's final face or figure if the poem's images must be *perpetually* endured? How does one reach this end without also destroying the implied mechanism of this destruction: poetry? Finally, how does one end these images? How does one bring them to term, by means of images, especially when this achievement seems to be a matter of life or death? As Bonnefoy wrote in "L'Eclairage objectif": "It is up to us to bring together in a single collective search the surplus of consciousness, the surplus of life, of freedom, and of reality. 'Poetry must be made by all, not by one.' We have to give meaning to this affirmation, or, with our death, to also bring down knowledge and poetry, and all true love, and all true rebellion" (68). Bonnefoy's early essays call for a revolt based on aesthetically autonomous convictions, through which society might participate in the dissolution of its practical and political responsibilities. Though he was soon to share Rimbaud's disenchantment with the supposed hallucinatory and revolutionary powers of salons (or palaces) at the bottom of a lake, Bonnefoy did not so much break with the proposed revolutionary violence of surrealism as with its postwar affinity for the arcane and for new myths.[31] It is thus not at all certain that Bonnefoy, as of 1947, had renounced his belief in poetry's ability to perpetually produce "image bombs." Nor is it certain that he then had recognized the deadend inherent to the belief in what Bataille, in 1929, had called the mythical liberty of Breton's "swindle" or "escroquerie."[32] Indeed, three years prior to Bataille's attack on surrealism, Pierre Naville (one of the first surrealists to be excommunicated by Breton) signaled a similar impasse in *La Révolution et les intellectuels*: "the moral scandals that the surrealists gave rise to do not presuppose, necessarily, the upheaval of intellectual and social values. The bourgeoisie does not fear such upheavals. It easily absorbs them."[33]

When Bonnefoy refused to sign Breton's manifesto, known as the *Rupture inaugurale de 1947*, he was far from renouncing or understanding every aspect of his own surrealist engagement.

The surrealism he quarreled with was above all Breton's postwar surrealism, which proposed a "surrealist comet" in pursuit of "a new myth," and which distanced itself from surrealism's aims prior to World War II, and which even mockingly referred to the "so-called *revolutionary surrealists.*" Nor was Breton any longer interested in poetry's "full fury" [pleine colère], since, no matter how enticing prior to World War II, the end of the world was no longer desirable thereafter: "We no longer desire [the end of the world] since we have seen the shape it has taken, which, against all odds, makes it seem absurd to us."[34]

Whereas "L'Eclairage objectif" conspicuously refers to Arthur Rimbaud's "objective poetry," "Donner à vivre" develops Bonnefoy's identification with both Rimbaud and Lautréamont. Bonnefoy demanded an "objective investigation, since everyone must participate in the living collective creation or face a death sentence" (67). He also warned against a consciousness enslaved to conceptualization, and called upon collective creativity to defeat what he considered the lethal threat of conceptual thought. He thus echoed both Rimbaud's demand that life be *changed* and Lautréamont's call for a collective poetry ("la poésie doit être faite par tous"). But his summons remained little more than a wish. Bonnefoy's reference to "objective poetry" was also an allusion to the historical context surrounding Rimbaud's reaction to the Paris Commune, in a letter (13 May 1871) to his early mentor Izambard: "Not to mention that your subjective poetry will always be terribly insipid. One day, I hope—many others hope the same thing—I will see objective poetry according to your principle, I will see it more sincerely than you would! I will be a worker: this idea holds me back when mad anger drives me towards the battle of Paris—where so many workers are dying as I write to you! Work now?—Never, never, I am on strike."[35] In *Arthur Rimbaud* (1961), Bonnefoy further identified his writings with Rimbaud's "poetic objectivism" as well as with his rejection of poetry defined as lyrical and aesthetical play. Bonnefoy wrote, "subjective poetry thus seems to be that poetry which is satisfied with idealized figures, *artiste* aestheticism and verbalism; it is thus sentimental and lyrical poetry which preserves only the tamable part of the emotions." Yet Bonnefoy still sensed that Rimbaud's "objective poetry" offered the possibility of reconciling poetic and political aspirations, and "that in going beyond this deceptive subjective poetry he [Rimbaud] could also break with our present misfortune."[36]

Several years later, in 1965, Bonnefoy noted that the stakes of objective poetry and the dangers of conceptual thought refer to their historical context and to the need to "change life, which means to destroy the alienation to which it has fallen prey because of conceptual thought and because of the law, be it moral or scientific."[37] In fact, "L'Eclairage objectif" (1946), already had exposed the historical dimension of this alienation: "After the ice, the first signs of the thaw are beginning to appear through history" (45).[38] "Donner à vivre" also proposes the following deceptively simple understanding of myth and poetry: "In the full sense of the word, our creatures that were only mythical must become living beings" (66). Bonnefoy's proposal to bring to life mythical creatures parallels Breton's rhetorical question in 1942: "A new myth? Do we have to convince these creatures that they come from a mirage or do we give them the chance to discover themselves?"[39] Yet, what is the full meaning of Bonnefoy's proclamation? Did he claim that beyond creatures that are merely the products of mythic tales there might exist new creatures, born of the synthesis of mythical and living beings? Or, on the contrary, in becoming "living beings" can these mythical creatures transgress their own mythical status? In the latter case, the truth of their myth would be that they disappear, or gradually become absent, as they partake in the becoming of being and in 'our' history as living beings. As opposed to a theory of transcendence, in which these mythical creatures would be sublated into a higher form of consciousness, their moment of sovereign transgression signifies their dissolution, and their intersecting with the instant in which they become nothing. The question of the presence or the absence of myth in poetry thus shifts from philological and anthropological concerns to political and historical concerns as well.

In "André Breton: *Ode à Charles Fourier*" (1947), Georges Bataille pointed to the changing status of myth and poetry to suggest that "in our times, poetry is no longer an expression of preestablished myths, it is itself the myth (or the 'absence of myth,' it doesn't matter which) that returns us to the frantic and so readily unbridled movement that we are."[40] Poetry is myth or its absence ("it doesn't matter which") because it no longer *repre-*

sents preexisting myths, but *presents* myth. Bataille's understanding of myth specifically contradicts Breton, who had suggested, equally in 1947, that it was in the past that one had to find "guarantors and specific guides, different from what previous eras might have known."[41] For Breton it was not so much a matter of renouncing as of changing one's mythical guide: Undine's mad love rather than the sober heroics of Ulysses.[42] For Bataille, one could not simply exchange one myth for another. One had to recognize that it was no longer possible to believe in some already sacred ("déjà sacrée") or already mythologized experience of the world. Rather than the *representation* of myth and of the sacred, poetry had become their *presentation*, as Bataille wrote in "Le Surréalisme en 1947": "from the moment that poetry is autonomous, and is no longer confined to the expression of some already sacred reality, poetry brings about, and thereby communicates everything associated with, the sacred" [tout le tremblement du sacré].[43] For Bataille, Breton's myth was founded on some "guarantor" and collaborated with the past, hence with what he pejoratively called "the world of activity." Thus, to propose adopting guides different from those of "prior generations" was merely to define poetry as the antithesis to the past world (of activity).

André Breton proposed the passion of "mad love" ("l'amour fou") as the antithesis to the past. For Bataille, however, this passion simply negated the world of activity, all the while collaborating with it, precisely through the activity of its negation. In order to escape this circle, Bataille elaborated the following consequences of poetry considered *as* myth (or its absence): "This represents a finalized divorce between poetry and the world of action, to which the strangest myths remained connected by positive references. It is thus not enough for us to reach, through some unforeseen method, a world of poetic passion and intensity. We need to maintain or, more precisely, to establish a connection between the two spheres: without a counterpart, the negation of the world of production would be only suicide or a lie."[44] The question Bataille was soon to ask, however, was at what "moment," if at all, can poetry achieve its sovereign intersection with myth. In other words, at what moment can poetry *present* myth in such a way as to evacuate myth of its timeless sacred function.

In "Donner à vivre" Bonnefoy recognized as insufficient the proclamation that poetry is the absolute antithesis of the "world of production." He asked, "does recourse to the imagination—which is critical of the state of society, which is a protest, and which precipitates history—risk burning the bridges that link us to both reality and to other men?" (68). He thus recognized poetic imagination as a form of social critique, yet he also pointed to the concomitant danger that this critique might embrace a wholly "mythical freedom." The dilemma of characterizing poetry as a form of social protest whose call for an absolute "other" liberty lay in its perhaps not being sufficient to maintain the "bridges" of community. The need for this continuity is also announced in the previously cited passage from "Donner à vivre": "In the full sense of the word, our creatures that were only mythical must become living beings" (66). The ambiguity of this sentence goes beyond linguistic arbitrariness to indicate that what was at stake in 1947 was not only the death of myth, but also the death of those who lived and live by this myth. In his essay "Les *Fleurs du mal*" (1953), Bonnefoy proposed that this "other freedom" can arise only from a poetry capable of expressing death in all its inconceivable arbitrariness. He distinguished poetry's "vrai discours" [true discourse] from the false discourse of the concept that "seeks, in the essence of things, their stability and certainty purified of nothingness. The concept conceals death."[45] As opposed to the conceptual, Bonnefoy suggested that poetry would not only express death and finitude, it also would be "la mort en acte," death's work or the active life of death. For Bonnefoy, in 1953, only such action could produce "le *vrai discours*" of another freedom.

To propose poetry as the voice of death is certainly heroic, but is poetry capable of such heroism? Various analyses of Bonnefoy's writings would have us believe that poetry can both speak *of* death and *speak death*, that poetry might be the "dire de la mort." As Bonnefoy put it in "Les *Fleurs du mal*," "if there is no poetry without discourse . . . how, then, can we salvage its truth, its greatness, if not by an appeal to death? Through the stubborn insistence that death be spoken; or better still, that it speak?" (40). Following what he took to be Baudelaire's example, Bonnefoy proposed the fusion of poetry and death: "Baudelaire took this improbable step. He named death" (41). Yet, the fusion of poetry and death also alludes to Georges Bataille who, in *Haine*

de la poésie (1947), suggested that only poetry could unleash "the truth of death."[46] The death poetry unleashes implies the annihilation not only of the mortal self, but of conceptual discourse's "active negation," which Bonnefoy earlier had proposed to destroy by means of "image bombs" and "poetic terrorism." Bataille, however, also questioned poetry's purported explosive power. Even if poetry can free us from logical discourse, it did not follow necessarily that poetry produces an authentic or "true discourse," as Bataille made clear in 1945: "The world of logic dies, yielding the riches of poetry, but the possibilities evoked are unreal, the death of the real world is unreal; everything is dubious and fleeting in this relative obscurity."[47] In other words, poetry's call toward death and finitude does not ensure death's presence within, or its presentation by, poetry. Indeed, as Bataille had written years earlier in "Sacrifices" (1933), "the death that frees me from the world that kills me has enclosed this world in the unreality of the self that is dying."[48] Perhaps, suggested Bataille, the death of poetry is no more than a fictitious death occasioned by poetry's only "relative obscurity."

In Bonnefoy's first major collection of poems, *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* (1953), the truth of death is emitted by "[le] plus grand cri qu'être ait jamais tenté" [the greatest scream that being has ever attempted].[49] The scream (born) of poetry seeks to be the authentic scream of a finite, mortal being. It is a scream that might allow the poet to name "la présence de la mort" [the presence of death] (71). It might also allow the poet to create this presence. A poetry capable of emitting such a scream might be equally capable of "saying" the presence of death ("dire la mort") and of emulating Baudelaire's act of "naming death." It could also pit death's presence against the eternal aesthetic stability imposed by the "false discourse" of art and of "pretty poetry." *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* also begins with an epigraph from Hegel's preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "Mais la vie de l'esprit ne s'effraie point devant la mort et n'est pas celle qui s'en garde pure. Elle est la vie qui la supporte et se maintient en elle" [But the life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it] (21).[50] Yet the mysterious figure known as Douve arises from a dialectic that seems hardly Hegelian.

The first poem of *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* proposes another dialectic, one that takes place "from within the domain of art" (VIII), as Bonnefoy suggested in his preface to the *Dictionnaire des mythologies*, and one that confronts action with contemplation:[51]

Je te voyais courir sur des terrasses,
Je te voyais lutter contre le vent,
Le froid saignait sur tes lèvres.

Et je t'ai vue te rompre et jouir d'être morte ô plus belle
Que la foudre, quand elle tache les vitres blanches de ton sang. (23)

[I was watching you run on terraces,
I was watching you struggle against the wind,
The coldness was bleeding on your lips.

And I saw you break and rejoice at being dead O more beautiful
Than the lightning, when it stains the white windowpanes with
your blood.]

Twice repeated in the first four syllables of the first two lines, the act of seeing ("Je te voyais") is dialectically opposed to the object's activity ("courir" and "lutter") in the last six syllables. The objectifying power of consciousness, Hegel's "Leben des Geistes," is perverted in the subsequent lines of the poem. In the "jouissance" of her death, Douve breaks with the objectifying consciousness implied by the imperfect tense "je te voyais." The Hegelian epigraph with which Bonnefoy chose to introduce his collection is thus not exemplary of Douve. She is, rather, the ironic inversion of Hegel's dialectic. In terms of Bonnefoy's references to Bataille, Marx, and the dialectic particular to art, *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* perverts the Hegelian life of the spirit. Douve is never an entirely autonomous figure nor entirely masterable nor capable of the mastery implied in the verb "se maintenir." She thus does not express what, in an early study of Bonnefoy's poetry, John E. Jackson called "the authenticity of this *life of the spirit*"; nor does she occupy "in the dialectic proposed by Hegel, the part of consciousness that maintains itself alive in death."[52] Through the transition from the imperfect tense "Je te voyais" to the perfect tense "Je t'ai vue," Douve no

longer simply exists in-itself as an object to be known by the contemplating subject. She begins to exist as a subject to whom the freedom has been given to struggle and to choose her own death: "And I saw you break and rejoice at being dead O more beautiful / Than the lightning, when it stains the white windowpanes with your blood." Objective contemplation gives way to a moment in which "la chair la plus proche se mue en connaissance" [the nearest flesh turns to knowing] (76), a moment in which, as Bonnefoy wrote in "La Poésie française et le principe d'identité" (1965), in *L'Improbable*, "the visible seems to be on the verge of becoming a face" (252). Douve thus embodies those mythical creatures that Bonnefoy had evoked in "Donner à vivre": a creature who, in becoming a living presence, dies or becomes *nothing* as a mythical creature. She embodies their absence.

Years later, during an interview published in *Le Monde* (1979), Bonnefoy suggested that while writing *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* he had been guided by "a figure whose meaning I cannot master" [que je n'arrive pas à lever].[53] Douve's meaning remained unmasterable because she was never absolutely "figured," never wholly represented. Because she was a figure that produced a series of images with which the poet could never absolutely come to terms, she also gave rise to contradictions Bonnefoy could not overcome—"que je n'arrive pas à lever." Douve thus exemplifies neither the Hegelian dialectic, with its absolute sublation ("relève") of the other; nor Hegel's "Spirit" maintaining itself in death for the sake of the triumph of the life of the spirit. Rather, she remains a trace figure irreducible to absolute presence. She is given over to the earth: "O douée d'un profil où s'acharne la terre, / Je te vois disparaître" [O gifted with a profile where earth rages, / I see you disappear] (37); and she appears, but only to disappear or to be pierced by the dark traces of the earth, insects, and trees:

> Je vois Douve étendue. Dans la ville écarlate de l'air, où combattent les branches sur son visage, où des racines trouvent leur chemin dans son corps—elle rayonne une joie stridente d'insectes, une musique affreuse.
>
> Au pas noir de la terre, Douve ravagée, exultante, rejoint la lampe noueuse des plateaux. (34)

> [I see Douve stretched out. In the scarlet city of air, where branches clash across her face, where roots find their way into her body—she radiates a strident insect joy, a frightful music.
>
> With the earth's black step, Douve, ravaged, exultant, returns to the lamp of the highlands.]

Douve is progressively transformed and absorbed by the earth's "fibreuse matière et densité" [fibrous matter and density] (65) for the sake of "a strident insect joy, a frightful [affreuse] music" that also evoke a wild or primitive landscape (the antiquated sense of the word "affreuse"). An earlier poem from *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* had already referred to the overwhelming power of this primordial music to "ravage" any overly precise poetic figure:

> La musique saugrenue commence dans les mains, dans les genoux, puis c'est la tête qui craque, la musique s'affirme sous les lèvres, sa certitude pénètre le versant souterrain du visage.
>
> A présent se disloquent les menuiseries faciales. A présent l'on procède à l'arrachement de la vue. (30)

> [The strange music starts in the hands, in the knees, then it is the head that cracks, the music declares itself under the lips, its certainty penetrates the face's subterranean side.
>
> Now the face's planes come apart. Now begins the tearing out of sight.]

Music saturates Douve's body, disintegrates her form, and produces a present in which the subject is freed from its initially objectifying vision. As such, Bonnefoy posited Douve as a wholly other figure capable of expressing a word or sound that does not tell a mimetic story, but calls out to an absent figure or to its own absence, to its own unrepresentable presence. The (non) figure of Douve attempts to free itself from its frozen position in history's representational narrative, and to break with "the glaciation of the image"[54] produced by the narrative of historical discourse:

> Ton visage ce soir éclairé par la terre,
> Mais je vois tes yeux se corrompre
> Et le mot visage n'a plus de sens.

La mer intérieure éclairée d'aigles tournants,
Ceci est une image.
Je te détiens froide à une profondeur où les images ne
prennent plus. (35)

[Your face tonight lighted by the earth
But I see your eyes become corrupted
And the word face no longer makes sense.

The inner sea lighted by circling eagles,
This is an image.
I hold you cold at a depth where images no longer take hold.]

"The inner sea lighted by circling eagles" is the functional equivalent of Breton's surrealist image: "Sur le pont la rosée à tête de chatte se berçait" [On the bridge the dew with the head of a tabby cat lulls itself to sleep].[55] Yet, Bonnefoy rejects such images by subjecting them to the deictic light of reason: "This is an image." When this figure, "visage," or face is evoked ("Your face tonight lighted by the earth") the light that shines on it fails to represent it. Rather, the face disintegrates in this light to the point of losing all meaning: "the word face no longer makes sense." Bonnefoy pushes the image to its limit, to what André du Bouchet had called (as early as 1954) the image's "term."[56] He seeks to draw out the figure from beneath the realm of images that he pushes to where "images no longer take hold," to where the observed turns against the observer, and to where the imagined turns against the one who imagines.

The absolute event of death thus takes the form of the word "Douve" that is seemingly capable of merging consciousness and death, or so Bonnefoy believed in 1958: "In this work, I wanted to confront words with death, and Douve is, of course, everything that dies, and above all words themselves, through the act of poetry. After a number of contradictory images, a word might suggest the informal reality of an absolute event."[57] In *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, Bonnefoy also referred to the absolute event as an exact presence, born of the poem's rupture "qu'aucune flamme désormais ne saurait restreindre; convoyeuse du froid secret; vivante, de ce sang qui renaît et s'accroît où se déchire le poème" [which no flame can now restrain; conveyor of the secret cold; living, of this blood that is reborn and grows

where the poem is torn] (40). Again in 1958, Bonnefoy suggested that poetry "must not only describe absence—that would only be a narrative. It has to accomplish an act, the only one worthwhile, to disengage presence from absence, to make of the irremediable and of the limit our true incarnation." He was quick to add, however, that he was not thinking of "a poetry of plenitude, which is always a lie; because of this chasm in what is."[58] Thus, Douve was to have been a sound or a Mallarmean "vocable" allowing for the syncopation or "decoagulation" of an idealizing consciousness.[59] Whereas Mallarmé remarked in "Crise de vers" (1896) that "the line of verse that, with several vocables, recreates a whole word, a new word, estranged from language and seemingly incantational, finishes this isolation of words,"[60] Bonnefoy distanced himself from the notion of poetry as incantation by suggesting that though he was drawn to the gnostic function of words (or "vocables") he did not adhere to it. At the limit of absence and of presence, Douve thus was to have arisen from the chasm where myth's timelessness touches the temporality of being; she was to have been a figure capable of dismantling each and every signifying system. Yet Douve represented more. In Bonnefoy's words, she was "already a name in the narrative, a proper noun suggesting, beneath its enigma, a waking, one that concerns us, and not an in-itself, an indifference. A face, not an essence."[61]

In 1976, Bonnefoy returned to Bataille's suggestion that surrealism was little more than a poetic "swindle" to propose that Breton's "illusory sovereignty" was a form of gnosticism that replaced reality with simulacra. Bonnefoy added that "there is gnosis or, at any rate, the risk of gnosis as soon as there is writing. . . . If the author does not watch out, he will believe that his text has culled all that was pure and true out of the world, and he will believe that these few words are the reflection or the word of an absent god."[62] As Bonnefoy pointed out, he was also thinking of the third-century Neoplatonist, Plotinus, who criticized those who believe that divinities can be conjured up through words, since gnostics were "simply uttering spells and appeasement and evocations in the idea that these Powers [invoked by spells] will obey a call and be led about by a word from any of us who is in some degree trained to use the appropriate forms in the appropriate way—certain melodies, certain sounds, specially directed

breathings, sibilant cries, and all else to which is ascribed magic potency upon the Supreme."[63]

If, as Bonnefoy suggested in *L'Improbable*, "there is no poetry without words" (40), then the eradication of the discursive element of poetry must remain necessarily partial, since its destruction would imply the destruction of poetry. This double bind also explains Bataille's comment that as long as poetry "has not destroyed everything, poetry is also the impotence of poetry."[64] *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* also asks to what extent death (as the life of poetry) must *act* (if it can), before becoming the authentic place of "true discourse"? To what extent must or can life maintain itself in death, as Hegel suggested in the passage cited by Bonnefoy? Poetry, conceived of as a life persisting within and through death, excludes, from its definition, the potential for both rhetorical play and for inauthentic death. In fact, *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* does challenge the role of a feigned or rhetorical death in, and through, poetry. The poem entitled "Lieu de la salamandre"—the sole of Bonnefoy's poems that not only questions myth but includes the word "myth"—is a perfect example of this challenge:

La salamandre surprise s'immobilise
Et feint la mort.
Tel est le premier pas de la conscience dans les pierres,
Le mythe le plus pur,
Un grand feu traversé, qui est esprit.

La salamandre était à mi-hauteur
Du mur, dans la clarté de nos fenêtres.
Son regard n'était qu'une pierre,
Mais je voyais son coeur battre éternel.

O ma complice et ma pensée, allégorie
De tout ce qui est pur,
Que j'aime qui resserre ainsi dans son silence
La seule force de joie.

Que j'aime qui s'accorde aux astres par l'inerte
Masse de tout son corps,
Que j'aime qui attend l'heure de sa victoire,
Et qui retient son souffle et tient au sol. (89)

[The surprised salamander freezes
And feigns death
This is the first step of consciousness among the stones,
The purest myth,
A great fire passed through, which is spirit.

The salamander was halfway up
The wall, in the light from our windows,
Its gaze was merely a stone,
But I was watching its heart beat eternal.
O my accomplice and my thought, allegory
Of all that is pure,
How I love that which so gathers in its silence
The sole force of joy.

How I love the one in harmony with the stars through the inert
Mass of its whole body,
How I love that which awaits the hour of its victory
And holds its breath and clings to the ground.]

Our consideration of myth, discourse, and death in Bonnefoy's poetry is considerably at odds with the many readings that suggest that "Lieu de la salamandre" proposes a new myth. A poem that includes such critical and abstract terms as "myth" and "allegory" cannot be the experience and the expression of what J. T. Naughton called "a moment of epiphany and unity."[65] Nor does it express what John E. Jackson calls an "autonomous purity," where the salamander is characterized as both mythical and allegorical: "Myth through the incarnation that it creates naturally through a dialectic of consciousness; allegory, through the sign that it represents henceforth for the mind, of *an autonomous purity*."[66] In light of Bonnefoy's declaration in "Donner à vivre" that "in the full sense of the word, our creatures that were only mythical must become living beings" (66), the poem "Lieu de la salamandre" presents the coming to life of these creatures in such a way that their mythical nature disappears. The truth of their myth is their disappearance when confronted with the temporal aspect of life, when "the hour of its victory" belongs to a creature that "holds its breath and clings to the ground." The truth of myth presents itself through its disappearance, through its becoming absent. Thus, the love expressed in the last stanza of the poem refers to the salamander's material presence; and its

"harmony" or *accord* with the stars and their constellations is also its *discord*, as it holds to the ground, rather than rising up above and beyond earth's finitude.

In "Lieu de la salamandre," the love for a unique place ("lieu") is not a surrealist mad love seeking to transgress any and all limits, in order to throw the poet and his readers into the epiphany of an endless here and now. Rather, this love traces the limit of this place. Thus, in evoking "the purest myth" and the "allegory / Of all that is pure," Bonnefoy sought not so much to reproduce a new myth or allegory, as to present the "becoming-absent" of allegory and myth. The salamander's death is also feigned. It is the mimicry of death. The here and now of its presence, in the first stanza, becomes, in the second, its absence: "The salamander *was* halfway up / The wall." If the poem "Lieu de la salamandre" evokes "the purest myth," then it is only because both myths and concepts must be bound to the laws of finitude through which myths and concepts dissipate. Thus, neither "Lieu de la salamandre" nor *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* is the attempt to save, as Michèle Finck has suggested, "myth from the grips of the concept,"[67] since, for Bonnefoy, myths are just as suspect as concepts. As he noted in *L'Improbable*, "myths will say death or will admit that they conceal it" (127). Poetry must torture both concepts *and* myths, forcing them to admit their logical and rhetorical distortions of death. In its praise of Baudelaire's desire to expel myth from poetry, Bonnefoy's essay "Les *Fleurs du mal*" also clearly defines the role he attributed to myth: "There is no *Olive* nor a *Délie* in *Les Fleurs du mal*. No myth comes to increase a distance between words and the sensible world" (36).[68] Both myth *and* the concept divide the self from the place of the here-and-now ("ici-maintenant"), defined as a limit, rather than as an epiphany. If the salamander is the expression of the here-and-now, it is only in the same manner that Baudelaire's "cygne" is the expression of "the *here* and the *now*" (161). Bonnefoy further suggested that poetry must ceaselessly recover this limit "in a pure and violent crisis, both affective and of the mind. For this act expected of poetry, and that was finally achieved by the poet of the *Fleurs du mal*, is foremost an act of love" (161). The limit that poetry recovers is not some absolute autonomous presence, but rather the limit of presence, the limit that *is* presence, the here-and-now that is both desired and loved

in a way that is neither Breton's "mad love" nor Bataille's mystical love. Rather, the love Bonnefoy proposed is founded on "an ardent joy devoid of sadism" (164), where Baudelaire's "cygne" and the salamander are the "here and now *as limit*." It is only insofar as the poem expresses this limit that what Bonnefoy calls the "hypothesis of meaning" can take place; a hypothesis through which "our frantic need to organize our knowledge within the space of a poem, to formulate the myth of what is, to build up the concept, will be subjected to the diffraction of the formless" (177). Both the myth and the concept are subject to this "diffraction of the formless," and both must "admit" death. Yet, Bonnefoy also questions whether poetry can force this admission, and whether it can present death, since perhaps this presentation is only perpetually deferred.

"Lieu de la salamandre" expresses "the purest myth," but in the sense of an *absolute myth* that, at its limit, becomes present and is resolved through its dissolution, through its becoming-absent. As early as *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, Bonnefoy does not so much seek to explode myth as to propose its "solution" in a site where history is both myth's undoing and its solution. His poetry thus approximates Walter Benjamin's suggestion that "it is a question of the dissolution of mythology within historical space."[69] In the context of Bataille's "L'Absence de mythe" (1947), the salamander is "the absence of myth" that nevertheless is still a myth: "the coldest, the purest, the only *true* myth" whose truth (what it presents) is its absence: "In the white and incongruous void of absence, myths that are no longer myths innocently live and come apart, and such that their duration would expose their precariousness."[70] Similarly, the celebration of the salamander's feigned death indicates that "Lieu de la salamandre" does not simply call for the absolute presence of death, but also questions this presence.[71] Through poetry, its presence both "lives and comes apart."

Another poem from *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* asks of Douve: "Es-tu vraiment morte ou joues-tu / Encore en tout miroir / A perdre ton reflet, ta chaleur et ton sang / Dans l'obscurcissement d'un visage immobile" [Are you really dead or do you play still / In every mirror / At losing your reflection, your warmth and your blood, / In the darkening of an immobile face?] (48). Like the immediacy of myth, the immediacy of death col-

lapses the distinction between presence and absence into the immobile mask of death. As Maurice Blanchot indicated in an essay on Bonnefoy entitled "Comment découvrir l'obscur" (1959), such an immediate presence is "the too present that does not present itself, leaving nothing through which to absent oneself from it."[72] In the same year as Blanchot's essay, in "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie," in *L'Improbable*, Yves Bonnefoy further dissociated his writings from surrealism by rejecting what he named "the impossible surrealist desire for collective invention" (168). Thus, as of 1953, and certainly by 1959, Bonnefoy had clearly begun to question the authenticity of "la mort en acte." The nothingness ("néant") that had been synonymous with death and being in 1953, was, in 1959, related to the fiction of "faux discours."

When Bonnefoy published his second major collection, entitled *Hier régnant désert* (1958), the terms "nothingness" and "false discourse" had become synonymous with an art form capable only of expressing a stable form of beauty that ruined the promise of finitude inherent in "la mort en acte." Thus, Bonnefoy turned against this timeless beauty: "Celle qui ruine l'être, la beauté, / Sera suppliciée, mise à la roue" [The one who ruins being, beauty / Shall be tortured, broken on the wheel].[73] *Hier régnant désert* further questions the authenticity of death in poetry by suggesting that its presence might be little more than a dream: "Il te suffit / De mourir longuement comme en sommeil" [It is enough for you / To die slowly as in sleep] (97), where an unknown "one" "qui a tant détruit . . . ne sait plus / Distinguer son néant de son silence" [who has destroyed so much . . . no longer can / Distinguish his nothingness from his silence] (107). Bonnefoy did not go so far as to suggest that all death in poetry is mere artifice, but he did ask: "Qu'est-ce que cette mort qui ne va rien guérir?" [What is this death that will heal nothing?] (125).

In asking whether it is impossible to express death in and through poetry, Bonnefoy's thought began to parallel Maurice Blanchot's, who, in *L'Espace littéraire* (1955), suggested that "death itself is perpetual flight before death."[74] Blanchot thus noted that absolute presence and absolute death are infinitely and absolutely deferred. When death begins to appear, our ability to expect, to figure, to negate, or to linguistically mediate the presence of this beginning begins to disappear. In other words, as death appears in language, language, in turn, disappears. In "Le

Grand refus" (1959), Maurice Blanchot further reduced Bonnefoy's *L'Improbable* to the following ironic complaint: "we have lost death."[75] Ironic, as Blanchot pointed out, because death was never ours to lose, and since "to die is, losing the time in which we can still come to an end, to engage oneself in the infinite *present* of the death that it is impossible to die."[76] In quoting from Baudelaire's poem "Le Squelette laboureur," Blanchot also questioned poetry's ability to "name death":

> Voulez-vous . . .
> Montrer que dans la fosse même
> Le sommeil promis n'est pas sûr;
> Qu'envers nous le Néant est traître;
> Que tout, même la mort nous ment? [77]
>
> [Would you . . .
> Show that even in the grave
> The promised sleep is not certain?
> That Nothingness betrays us,
> That everything, even death lies to us?]

Poetry is not solely "la mort en acte" [active death], but also "la mort feinte" [feigned death]. Thus, death and nothingness are not the absolutely authentic end they first appeared to be: "far from characterizing authentic possibility, Heidegger's 'being-for-death' thus would represent for Baudelaire only one more imposture."[78] For Bonnefoy, who had suggested that Baudelaire had been able to "name death," the repercussions of Blanchot's criticism of the authenticity of death in poetry can only have been overwhelming.

Present-day readings of Bonnefoy's poetry overlook the difficult lesson he learned during the 1950s, through his first poems and through their encounter with the writings of Bataille and Blanchot. Bonnefoy's desire to "say death" ran up against the potentially endless and unattainable death born of poetic discourse. His search for poetry as the bearer of death's presence encountered a "dream death" that is little more than an endlessly deferred presence, an endless night. In *Hier régnant désert*, "la mort en acte" becomes a myth where "plus rien ne change," and where it is "Toujours la même nuit qui ne s'achève pas" [Nothing changes anymore / Always the same unending night] (98). Thus

it no longer suffices to suggest that for poetry it is "vital that the presence of what is other preserve its fundamental independence."[79] Independence is certainly vital, but the question is whether poetry can be the life or vitality of otherness and death. Death, produced or evoked through the language of poetry, is not solely the expression of being and otherness, but also the expression of nothingness and of its antithesis, the repetition of the same. Thus, for Blanchot, "the word gives me the being, but it gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what remains of it when it has lost being."[80] This does not mean, as Richard Stamelman suggests, that Blanchot believes language expresses the attempt to return to a moment of silence "before speech changed everything, and death appeared."[81] Rather, death is irreducible to such a "goal" since "without death, everything would sink into absurdity and nothingness."[82] For Blanchot, as for the later Bonnefoy, death is plural. It might be an all too well-known death that is "the beginning of the life of spirit," but it is also "the immediate dissolution in which everything disappears without thought."[83] Beyond the death that proclaims itself the "life of the spirit," there is another death whose otherness guarantees no truth; one that expresses "what, in death, is irreducible to truth, to any unveiling, that which never reveals itself, never hides, never appears."[84] For Bonnefoy, death's plurality had begun to haunt poetry's "relative obscurity."

In 1974, regarding the surrealist Georges Henein, Bonnefoy recognized the need to distinguish between a possibly tyrannical surrealist belief in a poetic call to arms, and the responsibility that ought to ground such convictions. For Bonnefoy, Henein was one of the first surrealists to recognize that writing's self-referential impetus risks replacing "the call to revolution with delighting in oneself, in which case to imagine is the same as to tyrannize, and like a second level of injustice."[85] Ten years earlier, in his monograph entitled *Miró*, Bonnefoy had already hinted at the potential link between surrealism and tyranny. He also further framed his understanding of death and nothingness in terms of both praise and criticism of André Breton's *L'Amour fou* (1937), and of a consideration of the paintings produced during the interwar period (during the rise of Hitlerism and of the Spanish Civil War) by the Catalan artist Joan Miró: "The West did not quite

know how to answer these challenges, and it was surrealism that first became obsessed with this essential dilemma—freedom or evil."[86] Bonnefoy praised surrealism's role as one of the first artistic movements "obsessed" with the consequences of General Franco and Hitler's rise to power. Surrealism confronted history with "l'amour fou"; a love beyond the measure of history, and the only form of emotional response Breton thought capable of reconciling "tout l'homme" [man in his entirety].[87]

For Bonnefoy, the surrealists' response to World War II was enough to prove their historical necessity. Surrealism went beyond the facile attempt to dismiss or explain away the violence inherent in the world wars to recognize that "in contrast to all the optimistic theories on the goodness of the natural, sexuality, murder, and the instincts of death and life then appeared inextricably linked" (24). Yet Bonnefoy was not entirely satisfied with surrealism's answer. He feared that Breton's mad love might also "collaborate with nothingness" [néant] (24), in which case there could be no values left by which to live: "If traditional forms of sublimation had to be denounced—at least the surrealists thought so—on what could the necessary sublimation of the instinct of destruction and death be founded? Must we accept Sade's love of nothingness [néant]? Can it really be opposed to Nazism's taste for nothingness [néant]?" (24). Bonnefoy reacted to Breton's "amour fou" by suggesting that, rather than expressing revolutionary and liberating violence, it might collaborate with a more tyrannical form of imagination born of nothingness and myth. Bonnefoy also formulated what he considered the major dilemma of the interwar period: "How can civilized man *simultaneously* save his [sexual] instinct and his moral imperatives? How much importance should be granted to freedom, which contains an element of violence, in a world where violence must be condemned because it is the carrier of evil" (20). Rather than reducing Breton's "amour fou" to yet another poetic innovation, Bonnefoy asked whether it might not be dangerously and, perhaps, disastrously related to both "Sade's love of nothingness" and "Nazism's taste for nothingness." Bonnefoy thus shifted his initial praise for surrealism toward a criticism of both this movement and his own early surrealist essays. Rather than sublimating prewar violence, perhaps the surrealist unleashing of primal instincts simply *collaborates* with the violence of a noth-

ingness that is no longer merely ontological or semiotic, but historically related to the "nothingness of Nazism."

In *Un Rêve fait à Mantoue* (1967), Bonnefoy proposed a fundamental distinction between "nothingness" [néant] and "absence": "what exactly is absence? Let us be sure that it is not nothingness"; and he suggested that they were two very different "ways of living (or surviving), and certainly two sorts of art."[88] Because of its totalizing and mythical aspect, nothingness [néant] belongs to what Bonnefoy called a self-perpetuating order "well established, except that it has been emptied of any content" (303). As opposed to nothingness, absence is altogether different: "We experience it—sometimes we intoxicate ourselves with it—when the ruin of mediations, often experienced as a historical event, brutally and suddenly throws us outside of any human order into the silence of the world, where there is only matter. Since no myth has survived to refract or filter its violence, we are blinded by this day that so many mystics have thus named an obscure night" (303–4). Absence is not mythical, nor is it the "obscure night" of mysticism and gnosticism. For Bonnefoy, absence refers to a "historical event." It is the result of the lived experience of "an absence that, rising from a ground we have not been able to rationalize, prevails over any adjustments, over all myths" (303). Absence goes beyond myth to a place where myth can dwell no longer.[89] The simultaneous attraction to nothingness and absence is thus also an attraction to two divergent forms of history and historical narrative: the first being the temptation of the false discourse and nothingness of an eternal myth; and the other, the temptation of a finite absence, which Bonnefoy named, in *L'Improbable*, the freedom of a "true poetic discourse" [vrai discours poétique] that might bring about "the transmutation of the finished into the possible, of memory into expectation, of deserted space into a journey, into hope" (184). For Bonnefoy, Breton's failure lay in his having romanticized myth as a force absolutely withdrawn from intellectual experience, and in his having thought through neither the absence nor the death of myth. Breton remained what Bonnefoy called "one of those backward people attracted to mythical consciousness," and for whom myth attested to "a reality that is irreducible to our way of approaching the world through the thought of form" [la pensée de la forme].[90] In other words, surrealism's understanding of myth

collaborated with the nothingness and the dreams that Bonnefoy then sought to chase away.

Several years following his distinction between nothingness and absence, again in *L'Improbable*, Bonnefoy turned to the works of Stéphane Mallarmé to suggest that "*poetry* must save being, which in turn might save us" (110). In his "Entretiens avec Bernard Falciola" (1972), Bonnefoy also criticized the image's capacity for utopian evocation: "after all, there is perhaps, at the end of the long detour of utopian images, a rendezvous with an image that is practicable by all."[91] Upon first consideration, Bonnefoy's reference to utopian images and to an image that might act as a communal referent ("practicable by all") again seems indebted to the romantic notion of poetry as collective myth. Indeed, in the sole reading of the affinity between Bonnefoy's notion of a collective image and German romanticism, Gabriele Bruckschlegel suggests as much: "Art and life shall culminate in a mutual symbiosis, reciprocally permeating one another through a *dialectique de l'exister et du livre—l'action et le rêve réconciliés!*, as Bonnefoy exclaimed, scarcely two hundred years later, in the spirit of the romantics."[92] Bruckschlegel's rapprochement of Bonnefoy and German romanticism is in fact an unwittingly daring interpretation of Bonnefoy's 1972 address, before the Académie de Belgique, entitled "Sur la fonction du poème," a closer reading of which reveals Bonnefoy's far more critical and problematic relation to the *Sinn der Romantiker*. In his address Bonnefoy asked: "Is it true that presence and writing are mutually exclusive?" He conditionally answered "yes," but only if "we valorize writing, freezing it in its acquired form." Yes, only if one decides that it is enough simply to write and to produce text "to the point that the author, deprived of all other goals, turns away from his possibilities, reifies himself, and can thus better let his human presence disappear in the work. But if, through a similar decision, the poem's primacy is denounced, then writing could reveal itself the crucible where, through a dialectic of existence and the book—the reconciliation of action and dream! [dialectique de l'exister et du livre—l'action et le rêve réconciliés!]—presence will not only come about, but deepen its rapport to itself."[93] In the nonromantic language of reification, and contrary to the romantic assertion of poetry's potential universalism, Bonnefoy contests the written poem's primacy, and he

clearly spurns the dissolution of man's presence ("[la] présence d'homme") into the poetic work.

In juxtaposing dreams and action, Bonnefoy was also reconsidering surrealism's failed reconciliation of the seemingly antinomial revolutions of poetry and politics, this time, however, in terms of the indirect correspondence between Baudelaire and Mallarmé. By exclaiming "l'action et le rêve réconciliés!" Bonnefoy was referring, in fact, to a letter in which Mallarmé wrote to Henri Cazalis (3 June 1863): "A modern poet has even been so foolish as to lament that *Action was not the sister of dreams*" [*l'Action ne fût pas la sœur du Rêve*].[94] The foolish poet in question is Baudelaire who, in his poem "Reniement de Saint Pierre," wrote: "Certes, je sortirai, quant à moi, satisfait / D'un monde où l'action n'est pas la soeur du rêve" [I certainly would depart satisfied / From a world where action is not the sister of dreams] (145). For the young Mallarmé (he was twenty-one at the time), who had only "Dream as refuge," absolute beauty evoked through dreams still was not impossible.[95] Rather, it represented the sole source of a freedom beyond all human action or will to action. In *L'Improbable* Bonnefoy thus suggested that, for Mallarmé, Baudelaire's despair over his inability to reconcile the poetic dream of beauty with the world of action was necessarily contradictory, since "if beauty in itself [beauté en soi] exists, then Mallarmé is right, impotence is the supreme duty, and longing for action is a form of foolishness" (79). Bonnefoy's statement remained hypothetical, however, for he subsequently insisted on the impossibility of this Mallarmean "pure notion" and of beauty in itself.

In considering Baudelaire and Mallarmé, Bonnefoy thus does not so much adhere to the romantic poetic universal alluded to by Bruckschlegel as he illustrates both the impossibility of the universal and the continued desire for this impossible universal. Bonnefoy concluded his address before the Académie de Belgique by stating: "Mallarmé wrote that *poetry sacralizes*. Baudelaire said somewhere that every poem must be an incarnation. The human drama is played out between these two desires, and it is played out today."[96] This conclusion again cautions against the implicit correlation between Bonnefoy's poetry and German romanticism. He embraced neither the poetics of the universal nor of the particular, but proposed instead to examine the critical

juncture between these "two ways of life." Bonnefoy also cautioned against linking his poetry to Richard Wagner (with Baudelaire as intermediary), and to the more transcendent than transgressional notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art. Bruckschlegel, for instance, suggested that "Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* was discovered for and defended in France by Baudelaire."[97] Michèle Finck also points to Bonnefoy's supposedly Wagnerian heritage in her interpretation of the role of color in Bonnefoy's 1975 collection *Dans le leurre du seuil*: "It seems to me that Bonnefoy works with color in the sense of Wagnerian leitmotif, as defined by Baudelaire: *Each character is, so to speak, blazoned by the melody*."[98] Such readings assume that Baudelaire's definition of Wagnerian leitmotif is clear and uncontroversial. It is not. Rather than wholeheartedly submitting to Wagner's philosophy of music, Baudelaire's understanding of melody's ability to "blazon" the characters can also be read as a critique of Wagner's relationship to mythology.[99] Read as negative criticism, Baudelaire's appreciation of Wagner also puts a different light on Bonnefoy's poetry. He rejects the total work of art prefigured in the romantic synthesis of poetry and society to propose, instead, figures (such as Douve) that oscillate between motion and immobility, between waking and dreaming, and between *logos* and *mythos*. For instance, "Le Temps et l'intemporel dans la peinture du Quattrocento" (1959), in *L'Improbable*, suggests that poetry is an "apprenticeship [that] goes back and forth ceaselessly between separation and union, between passivity and attentiveness, between waking and dreaming (as it were), until the improbable total experience that would be [qui serait] the synthesis of the nocturnal path of dreams and the lucidity of waking" (85). At the time, this improbable experience remained cautiously conditional: "qui serait."

By distinguishing between nothingness and absence, Bonnefoy also chose between the surrealist ambition of establishing another myth and the difficult task of evoking myth's absence. In "Proximité du visage" (1961), published in *Un Rêve fait à Mantoue*, Bonnefoy approached this distinction by comparing the art of Alberto Giacometti and Raoul Ubac. Giacometti "goes directly to the face, to immediately struggle with transcendence and with the future. But does he succeed in giving them form? Does he not, rather, only underline the convulsion of an *impossible* deliver-

ance, an *impossible* resurrection?" (316). In its immediate struggle with transcendence, Giacometti's art is similar to Bonnefoy's early poetry. His later poetry, however, is closer to the works of Raoul Ubac, whom he considers the source of an "essential prudence," in the sense of what he named "a feeling that is always alive with a sense of responsibility toward mankind": "prudently [Ubac] considers that the face of man, if it must reappear, renewed in a subsequent painting, cannot presently be anticipated. He defines, he delimits, the body, that earthly part in the human being, that writing that is legible for today's consciousness. But often these recumbent statues are decapitated: Ubac has not dared to repair the degradation caused by modern iconoclasm" (315–16).

Bonnefoy's consideration of Ubac and Giacometti centers around the word 'prudence,' and Ubac's art, though rarely depicting a face (and then only in profile), is defined as "forward-looking" [*pro-videre*]. Ubac's art prudently refrains from wresting "the event to come" from its future. As opposed to Giacometti's "thunderstruck vigor" [élan foudroyé], "Ubac is content to circumscribe the field of the event to come [l'événement à venir]. Gathering the wood for the fire, not seeking to anticipate time's justice—this timeless hand that suddenly tears through the hazy timespan of 'the people who die as the seasons turn' [des gens qui meurent sur les saisons]" (316). Rather than anticipating the event, and inserting it preemptively into a hazy transcendent historical structure, Ubac's art seeks to give the event over to time, over to its proper temporality. By citing the words "des gens qui meurent sur les saisons" from Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Adieu,"[100] Bonnefoy further distinguished between Ubac and Giacometti. In his monograph entitled *Arthur Rimbaud* (1961), Bonnefoy suggested that Rimbaud's poetry represented a form of modernity and an experience of a world "untouched by miracles, of a difficult but healthy duality in the condition of man, misery and hope at the same time. . . we exist only in this desire, that never obtains and never relents—our eternal struggle with finitude, far from the discouraged and far from the credulous, *far from those who die as the seasons turn*" [*loin des gens qui meurent sur les saisons*].[101] Giacometti's "élan foudroyé" is associated with an obsession for salvation that Rimbaud's and Ubac's art renounce for the sake of a ceaseless confrontation with the finite world.

Whereas an obsession similar to the one attributed to Giacometti is present in Bonnefoy's early surrealist essays and in *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, his later poetry emphasizes an obstinate confrontation with finitude and the opposition between instinct and reason. Yet, Bonnefoy does not so much distinguish his own art from that of Giacometti, as from present-day readings that interpret Giacometti's art from the perspective of a limited reading of Georges Bataille; readings that suggest Giacometti reproduces primitive or archaic forms and that, in Bonnefoy's skeptical words, he reduces "the human figure to that of an insect, which would be to relive a 'movement toward the base,' toward 'the mud of the world.'" For Bonnefoy, rather than the expression of what Bataille named "the world of horror," Giacometti's striving toward formless figures implies that the creative mind attempts to reach "an essential level of self-consciousness whose perspective of presence can become the witness and the assumption of presence."[102] Bonnefoy's criticism and praise for Giacometti reveals that, even after parting with surrealism, he had yet to define his own direction, since this break did not ensure avoiding an uncertain artistic path. Beyond surrealism there remained a task for which many approaches are available, but to which not all are suited. As Bonnefoy suggested in 1980, the importance of surrealism was that it reestablished a link between "transcendence" and writing; and "that this transcendence expressed itself only through another mythology does not take away any of the force of the direction that was beginning to appear." Though he wished to dissolve the surrealist dream, Bonnefoy also recognized that the dream could not be absolutely annihilated: "beyond surrealism, but in fact with its momentum, we need to redefine the human community, in the fullest, most open sense of the word."[103] By seeking to go beyond surrealist dreams Bonnefoy also admitted his debt to these dreams.

By reevaluating surrealism, Bonnefoy also throws a harsher self-critical light on *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, in which the human figure was similarly reduced to the insect's formlessness, reflecting what Bonnefoy later perceived as an overly archaic and mythological function of art. In terms of Bonnefoy's varying interpretations of Giacometti and Ubac, both

Hier régnant désert (1958) and *Pierre écrite* (1965) express his distance from surrealism. His affinity for Ubac extends also to the painter's own postwar rejection of surrealism. As Ubac suggested in 1970, World War II freed him "from surrealism, in the sense that it absorbed certain visionary aspects of surrealism to reinstate them in its own horrors, its own tragic mood. Before the end of the war I was again given over to myself. I again started to draw the simplest objects."[104] For Bonnefoy, Ubac's paintings also evoke a musical accord comparable to a nonrepresentational artistic act freed from what, in *Un Rêve fait à Mantoue*, he calls the "theater of old-fashioned figuration" (311).[105] In his monograph entitled *Miró*, Bonnefoy again considered the role of music in Joan Miró's art, whose transition from a painting such as *Terre labourée* (1923–24), whose "surrealism" is already questionable,[106] to the *Constellations* (1939–41) implied the incorporation of both "musical harmony" and nonrepresentational, scriptural, and notational qualities (26). For Bonnefoy, from 1939 onward, these qualities are attributable to Dadaist rather than to surrealist influences: "Dada had spontaneously again become a language. As its name indicates, it became an essentially impersonal language, that expressed not only the criticism of this or that value, but called for a man of instincts pitted against the man of values" (14). If surrealism's late conception of myth collaborated with nothingness and dreams, Bonnefoy recognized nevertheless that it was only by passing through nothingness and the dream content that poetry could redefine itself as something other than inactive nothingness. Only by passing through the threshold between waking and dreaming, between nothingness and absence, could the impossible nature of myth be revealed.

As the title of Bonnefoy's later collection of poems *Dans le leurre du seuil* (1975) indicates, there is no longer a limit but a threshold ("seuil") between absence and presence, between being and nothingness, and between a true and a false death. The title and the poems of this collection also express the persistent desire for nothingness, for myth, for dreams, and for a false death: "Non, nous ne sommes pas guéris du jardin, / De même que ne cesse pas, gonflé d'une eau / Noire, l'épanchement du rêve quand les yeux s'ouvrent" [No, we are not cured of the garden, any more / Than ceases the dream's outpouring, swollen with black / Water, when we open our eyes].[107] The dream of the idyllic garden

persists, as does a dream even after one wakes. As Bonnefoy wrote in an earlier section of *Dans le leurre du seuil*: "Mais non, toujours / D'un déploiement de l'aile de l'impossible / Tu t'éveilles, avec un cri, / Du lieu, qui n'est qu'un rêve" [But no, always / With the wing of the impossible unfolding / You awaken, with a scream, / From the place which is only a dream] (231). Though quite different from the scream that is heard throughout *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, the scream in *Dans le leurre du seuil* has invariably been interpreted as the unaltered continuation of the former: as the poem's presentation of death and finitude thereby disrupting false discourse. For instance, this scream has been read as the unique event of death's presence within the poem: "at the threshold of the poem, the reader is greeted by a cry resounding with the sounds of the mortal world."[108] Such a reading overlooks the infinite and infinitely deferred nature of the scream: "always . . . you awaken." The poetic self does not definitively awaken, but it is always in the process of awakening. Thus, the place that should have been finite reveals itself a dream within a dream. The scream is but the momentary or, rather, illusory shift from one fiction to another, since the waking it suggests is endless, endlessly situating the mortal world between two fictions. It thus remains to be demonstrated that poetry can evoke the otherness of this place. Poetry must verify whether it can indeed *say* the otherness of death.

The place evoked throughout *Dans le leurre du seuil* more closely resembles one where, according to Maurice Blanchot, "in time's absence what is new renews nothing; what is present is not contemporary; what is present presents nothing, represents itself."[109] The scream seeks to present mortality, but it falls back into the inactuality of representation, where the act of waking remains a perpetually unfinished dream. *Dans le leurre du seuil* spells this out as clearly as does Blanchot:

> Et tu te lèves une éternelle fois
> Dans cet été qui t'obsède.
> A nouveau ce bruit d'un ailleurs, proche, lointain;
> Tu vas à ce volet qui vibre . . . Dehors, nul vent,
> Les choses de la nuit sont immobiles
> Comme une avancée d'eau dans la lumière.
> Regarde,

L'arbre, le parapet de la terrasse,
L'aire, qui semble peinte sur le vide,
La masse du safre clair dans le ravin,
A peine frémissent-ils, reflet peut-être
D'autres arbres et d'autres pierres sur un fleuve. (231–32)

[And you get up one eternal time
In this summer that haunts you.
Once more the sound of an elsewhere, near, far;
You go to the shutter that is vibrating . . .
Outside, no wind,
The things of night are still
As a thrust of water in the light.
Look,
The tree, the terrace's parapet,
The field that seems painted on nothing,
The mass of light sandstone in the ravine,
Are barely trembling, perhaps the reflection
Of other trees and stones on a river.]

The poet seeks to escape this haunting summer, and though the "shutter" seems to vibrate, there is "no wind." This exterior seems to be only a dream where the things of the night are immobile, and deep in "the sleep of old" (232). The preceding verses also evoke what Bonnefoy, in 1991, called a concern "anxieuse de l'absolu"; an attempt to reach the absolute "by forcing the limits and by subverting the values of his self-image to which words bind him—which of course implies that this image has been lived to the limit of its possibility, otherwise this forcing would also only be a dream—well, the virtue of this attempt is that it preserves the *anxiety*, without which humanity would be little more, at the level of the spirit as well, than a vain form of matter" [vaine forme de la matière].[110] The poet's call toward another (toward "tu") expresses his anxious concern, and calls for an impossible waking:

Regarde! De tout tes yeux regarde! Rien d'ici,
Que ce soit cette combe, cette lueur
Au faîte de l'orage, ou le pain, le vin,
N'a plus cet à jamais de silencieuse
Respiration nocturne qui mariait
Dans l'antique sommeil

Les bêtes et les choses annuitées
A l'infini sous le manteau d'étoiles. (232)

[Look! with your eyes look! Nothing from here,
Neither this glen nor this flash
At the storm's crest, nor the bread nor the wine,
Has kept this forever silent
Nocturnal breathing that wedded
In the sleep of old
The ancient beasts and things of the night
Infinitely beneath the cloak of stars.]

"This flash / At the storm's crest" and "the sleep of old" indicate a mythical world of unity and plenitude, whereas "the bread" and "the wine" are what Bonnefoy has named "words for communion [bringing] beings into the fold of a unity."[111] Yet, Bonnefoy also dismisses these two worlds, judging them incapable of maintaining the link between "The ancient beasts and things of the night / Infinitely beneath the stars." The vault of the sky no longer maintains the perfect mythical communion of animals and things nor of being and meaning: nor of the "flow of all through all." "Words for communion," perhaps, but this does not mean that these words are necessarily "endowed with considerable ontological power,"[112] since there remains only the trace of this communion's absence or the debris of its presence: "Tard, quand l'éponge pousse sur la table / Qui brille un peu / Les débris du pain et du vin" [Late, when the sponge pushes on the table / Slightly shining / The remains of bread and wine] (315). *Dans le leurre du seuil* thus mourns neither the disappearance of myth nor of allegory. Rather, as Bonnefoy wrote in the poem entitled "Le Fleuve":

Le ciel brille pourtant des mêmes signes,
Pourquoi le sens
A-t-il coagulé au flanc de l'Ourse,
Blessure inguérissable qui divise
Dans le fleuve de tout à travers tout
De son caillot, comme un chiffre de mort,
L'afflux étincelant des vies obscures? (232)

[Yet the sky is lit by the same signs
Why has meaning

Coagulated on the flank of the Bear
An incurable wound, a clot
Like the cipher of death, that divides
The glittering rush of dark lives
In the flow of all through all?]

The coagulation of meaning originates in signs seeking to absolutely define being, which, for Bonnefoy, is equal to saying that these signs "want to reduce it—to 'coagulate' it into an image."[113]

"L'Ourse" in *Dans le leurre du seuil* refers to the seven stars of the north celestial pole, the constellation Ursa Major. It is also a textual reference to Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1897): "le Septentrion aussi Nord / UNE CONSTELLATION / froide d'oubli et de désuétude" [the pole also North / A CONSTELLATION / cold with oblivion and desuetude] (477). This constellation equally appears in the tercets, dear to Bonnefoy, of Mallarmé's "Sonnet en-yx":

Mais proche la croisée au nord vacante, un or
Agonise selon peut-être le décor
Des licornes ruant du feu contre une nixe,

Elle, défunte nue en le miroir, encor
Que, dans l'oubli fermé par le cadre, se fixe
De scintillations sitôt le septuor. (69)

[But near the vacant north crossing, a gold
Agonizes, according perhaps to the decor
Of unicorns lashing fire against a nymph

Who, deceased nude in the mirror, yet
Still, in enframed oblivion, appears
In scintillations forthwith the septet.]

As early as 1959, in *L'Improbable*, Bonnefoy had recognized that reducing the poem to its own reflection is a peculiarly Mallarmean form of destruction born of the failure of what he called an "old form of hope," to which he added: "We can no longer ignore the fact that it is impossible to escape through words from the nothingness that consumes things, ever since *Un Coup de dés* celebrated this irremediable fact" (154–55). For Mallarmé, the constellation's "réflexion stellaire" [stellar reflection] expresses its own incomprehensibility and the impossibility of proposing poetic constellations that might give absolute meaning to the world.[114] Though he announced the end of poetry conceived of as the vehicle for transcendent meaning and as the foundation for some new cosmology, Mallarmé nevertheless countered this loss with the topos of reflection, of the mirror of poetry linking sky and earth. He replaced his loss with what Bertrand Marchal defines as the "poetic immanence of meaning" through which "the mind discovers that it is immanent to language and evokes what, in less spiritual terms, has been named the infinite process of signification."[115] For Bonnefoy, this immanence represents Mallarmé's gnostic inward turn toward "the potentialities of language";[116] a turn that sought to conjure up absolute meaning within language, even if at the price of man's disappearance. Thus Bonnefoy noted that Mallarmé's "Sonnet en -yx" expresses the unacceptable lure ("leurre") of poetry since its universe is founded on "appearances [and] is not really our world . . . it is more like a garden. It contains the harmony of luxurious sensations, but not of those that are found in the depths of lived time."[117]

The garden of which we and poetry are not cured ("nous ne sommes pas guéris") is similar to Baudelaire's "jardin de la paresse" in "Les Phares" (12–14). It also appears in Bonnefoy's poem "Le Jardin," from *Hier régnant désert*, which questions the way Mallarmean immanence erases "le temps vécu":

Les étoiles voûtaient les murs du haut jardin
Comme les fruits de l'arbre au-delà, mais les pierres
Du lieu mortel portaient dans l'écume de l'arbre
Comme une ombre d'étrave et comme un souvenir.

Étoiles et vous, craies d'un pur chemin,
Vous palissiez, vous nous preniez le vrai jardin,
Tous les chemins du ciel étoilé faisant ombre
Sur ce chant naufragé; sur notre route obscure. (173)

[The stars vaulted the walls of the high garden
Like the fruits of the tree beyond, but the stones
Of the mortal place carried in the froth of the tree
Something like a shadow of a stem and like a memory.

Stars and you, chalk lines of a pure path,
You paled, you took from us the true garden,
All of the paths of the starry sky casting a shadow
Over this shipwrecked song; over our obscure way.]

The garden of false death, vaulted by a constellation of stars, produces the lure of "a pure path" [un pur chemin]. Yet, this phrase can also be pronounced in such a way as to hear "impur chemin," or "an impure path." As in "Lieu de la salamandre," the stones of the "lieu mortel" present a "true" garden that inverts the overly pure constellation of stars, and that promises remembrance ("souvenir") of "the depth of lived time" [la profondeur du temps vécu]. The constellation of the false garden of forgetfulness gives way to the true garden of "lived time." Bonnefoy rejected Mallarmé's poetic constellation, as it appeared in the "Sonnet en -yx," since it "could only unveil a *constellation* of notions, which is to say a configuration imagined by our eccentric gaze toward the stars of the distant sky."[118] Mallarmé's poetry could only evoke an immanent constellation, one that is necessarily flawed since it seeks to exclude what he called "the key to being" or chance ("le hasard"). For it is chance, in Bonnefoy's reading of Mallarmé, that "will always taint this global perception, the mirror of the ancient sonnet will always remain the emblem of our writing in exile."[119] Bonnefoy thus rejected the ease with which Mallarmé's "garden" passes from nothingness to beauty—"After having found *Nothingness* I found *Beauty*," wrote Mallarmé.[120] *Dans le leurre du seuil* also rejects the transition from transcendence to immanence:

Plus avant que le cri
Dans un autre rêve,
Se jette en criant celui qui
Nous représente,
Ombre que fait l'espoir
Sur l'origine. (247)

[Further ahead than the scream
Into another dream
The one who represents us
Throws himself with a scream
Hope's shadow
Over the origin.]

"The one who represents us" seeks to transgress the scream that believes it can express "la mort en acte." It seeks to go beyond this scream into the dream of immanence, while still screaming. Thus, *Dans le leurre du seuil* seeks to reject the "dream of the absolute," though without accepting either immanence or fiction as the limit of the human spirit. As Mallarmé admitted in 1869, this limit was his own barrier: "It has been demonstrated through letters—the equivalent of Fiction, and the inanity of the adaptation to Fiction's Absolute of an object which would make of it an absolute Convention" (854). Thus, as Bertrand Marchal suggests, Mallarmé's "Sonnet allégorique de lui-même" expresses "fiction as the unsurpassable horizon of the human spirit."[121] In *Dans le leurre du seuil*, however, the hope of "this one" [celui]—"who throws himself with a scream"—denies and transgresses the limit of fiction (*mythos*) by throwing the corporeal shadow of hope over mythical origins or beginnings: "Hope's shadow / Over the origin." As with the verses from "Lieu de la salamandre"—"How I love the one in accord with the stars through the inert / Mass of its whole body"—myth and living beings are linked in order to alter myth, and in order to confront the illusion of a constellation as absolute guarantor of meaning and being. They are also linked to confront the Mallarmean temptation to reduce language to the role of immanently reflecting this constellation.

The poems of *Dans le leurre du seuil* confront "un reflet d'étoile / Sur du fer" [the reflection of a star / On steel] (240), thus highlighting the poetic mechanism that seeks to project the depths of the constellations on a crude two-dimensional reflective surface made of steel, thereby undermining this mechanism. These poems push "Plus avant que l'étoile / Dans ce qui est" [Ahead of the star / In what is] (258), thus striving to oppose the scintillation of the Mallarmean septet in a mirror. In its place, the poem creates "La houle d'un bruit second" [The swell of a secondary noise] (250) vibrating in "le rien de l'oeuvre" [the work's nothingness] (252). On this surface where the work of the poem is nothing ("rien") Bonnefoy recognizes that "le besoin de sens presse longtemps / Le sein froid de l'image / Et seul, le cœur serré, / Se détourne, sous les constellations du vain désir" [the need for meaning has clutched so long / The cold breast of the image / And alone, heartsick, / Turns away, under the constella-

tions of vain desire] (311–12). Beyond these constellations of vain desire and barren images there might arise another noise—"un bruit second"—filled with the knowledge of the vanity of its own desire.

As with Bataille in 1947, in 1977 Bonnefoy warned against any attempt to assimilate art to myth for the sake of a new social order: "Art is no longer the mirror where societies like to see their idea of the world reflected; it is now the vacillating flame, sometimes almost extinguished, that will precede us into the chasms of the final days."[122] Neither Bataille nor Bonnefoy considers art as the embodiment of myth, but as the experience of myth's dissolution. Then again, Mallarmé already had suggested that poetry does not seek to dissolve old myths in order to produce new ones (545), to which Bonnefoy added, "if presence has thwarted, in the work, the myth that eclipsed it, then this is a good reason to not dress up the work with another name, to not weigh it down with a fiction, or a saintly history."[123] For Bonnefoy, Mallarmé also sought to build "on this apparently final nothingness, perceiving in its play of foam beneath the stars, in the nothing that is written and unwritten, at least passing time, freed dreams, perhaps a new celebration for a hopeless society."[124] Bonnefoy points out, however, that the historical nature of this "passing time" is based on "the absence of this absolute presence we call the *here-and-now*" [*l'ici-maintenant*], since this immediate here-and-now is already "a myth that does not recognize that no one can escape the structures of language, whether we revel in them or suffer from them, whether we are their master or their slave."[125] It is only when myth partakes of the temporal and only if myths say death or "admit that they obscure it" that this hope is justified. Without this admission all poetic creation is reduced to nothingness ("néant"). In *Dans le leurre du seuil*, Bonnefoy also further criticized the attempt to create an absolute work of art:

> Il veut bâtir! Ne serait-ce, exténuée,
> Qu'une trace de foudre, pour préserver
> Dans l'orgueil le néant de quelque forme,
> Et c'est rêver, cela encore, mais sans bonheur,
> Sans avoir su atteindre à la terre brêve. (324)

> [He wants to build! Be it only, exhausted,
> A trace of lightning, to preserve
> Proudly the nothingness of some form,
> And this too is to dream, but without joy,
> Without having been able to reach the brief earth.]

Even the temptation of constructing a trace of sacred lightning is rejected for its proximity to the disastrous dream of a new, deserted, and empty cosmology.

In 1987, twelve years after the publication of *Dans le leurre du seuil*, Bonnefoy published *Ce qui fut sans lumière*, in which the words "néant," "constellation," and "absence" appear in various poems. If I have sought to follow the course of "nothingness" throughout the writings of Bonnefoy, it is perhaps only to better understand the following two verses from *Ce qui fut sans lumière:* "La griffe de la pluie sur la vitre, soudain, / Comme si le néant paraphait le monde" [The clawing of the rain on the windowpane, suddenly, / As though nothingness were paraphing the world].[126] "As though," but not quite: perhaps nothingness is the final authority or author appending its paraph to the work of the world, but not quite. It is only almost the final authority. The poem "Le Mot *ronce*, dis-tu," from the same collection, turns from nothingness to absence:

> Du feu qui va en mer la flamme est brève,
> Mais quand elle s'éteint contre la vague,
> Il y a des irisations dans la fumée.
> Le mot *ronce* est semblable à ce bois qui sombre.
>
> Et poésie, si ce mot est dicible,
> N'est ce pas de savoir, là où l'étoile
> Parut conduire mais pour rien sinon la mort,
> Aimer cette lumière encore? Aimer ouvrir
> L'amande de l'absence de la parole? (42)[127]
>
> [Brief is the flame that goes out to sea,
> But when it is quenched against the wave,
> The smoke is filled with iridescence.
> The word *brambles* is like this sinking wood.
>
> And poetry, if we can pronounce this word,
> Isn't it to know how, there where the star

Seemed to lead, but only toward death,
Still to love this light? to love opening
The kernel of absence of words?]

Beyond the vain and deathly still reflections of a new cosmology within the poem's mirror—"Qui peut-être consume, et peut-être sauve" [That perhaps consumes, and perhaps saves] (25)—Bonnefoy has chosen to hold to the brief glimmer of absence, perhaps a presence. He has chosen to hold to this threshold and to these "irisations" by means of a mytho-poetics constructed around the antinomial light of the dream's mortal star. "J'ébauche une constellation mais tout se perd" [I sketch out a constellation but everything vanishes] (87), wrote Bonnefoy in "L'Agitation du rêve." The irresolution of this constellation indicates the stakes of the becoming-absent of myth and its constellations.

2

Louis-René des Forêts: Figures of Remembrance

Failing their being subjected to the corrupting influence of time, the figures of the dead have the inalterable brightness of stars immobilized in the sky; hardly visible luminous points whose infinite distance renders them hazy and deprived of meaning.

—Louis-René des Forêts

"WHAT IS PROPER TO A STORY [HISTOIRE] IS THAT IT CAN EITHER BE or not be a history [histoire]."[1] Jacques Rancière's play on the ambiguity of the French word "histoire" suggests that an embarrassingly simple impropriety governs history and is capable of producing a narrative that is free from the principle of identity guiding history's Aristotelian scruples. For Rancière, history is no longer bound, for better or for worse, to a truth principle (*logos*) nor to the imperative of relating exactly what has happened in the past. Rather, it is now free to follow the discursive path Aristotle had ascribed to poetry: to say "what might happen."[2] For Louis-René des Forêts, such an impropriety also produces a narrative inclined to the sophistic wiles of saying what is not, and of proposing what might never have happened as though it were the true recounting of a past event.

Face à l'immémorable (1993), part of Louis-René des Forêts's work in progress *Ostinato*, offers one instance of a narrative where *logos* and *mythos* have become indissociable, and where "l'advenu et le non-advenu ont partie liée au point de former comme par osmose naturelle une unité désormais indissociable" [what has come to pass and what has not are linked to the point of forming, as though through natural osmosis, a unity that is henceforth indissociable].[3] As with Bonnefoy's early attempt to

insert "a name into the narrative,"[4] des Forêts's *Ostinato* establishes an indissociable and almost naturally osmotic link between what has come to pass ("l'advenu") and what has not ("le non-advenu"). In so doing, it also implies that historical narrative is predicated on the ability to forget the events it is supposed to narrate, and predicated on repressing the knowledge that its status as an objective science is itself founded on the aberrant natural identity of *mythos* and *logos*.[5] Rancière's interpretation of history also demands that this discipline come to terms with the following declaration from "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce" (1991): "c'est chaque fois la fiction qui triomphe comme si elle tenait seule, contre la grossière évidence des faits, le langage de la vérité" [each time it is fiction that triumphs as though it alone, against the crude evidence of facts, upheld the language of truth].[6]

The unthinkable identity of *logos* and *mythos* is expressed in literature through what Michel Leiris, in *Le Ruban au cou d'Olympia* (1981), named a "poetic narrative," where the event becomes writing, and writing, in turn, becomes the event.[7] For des Forêts, and according to the logic of a "poetic narrative," the meaning of more or less uncertain past events is not so much represented as it is performatively presented. As he wrote in *Face à l'immémorable*, "*c'est ainsi . . . même s'il en fut autrement*" [*It is so . . . even if it was otherwise*] (21). Such a narrative brings past events to life "selon un mode qu'on appelera, faute de mieux, poétique" [in accordance with a mode that we will call, for lack of a better term, poetic] (16). Poetic narrative indicates its own truths ("c'est ainsi"), even if these do not rhyme with the past events that supposedly gave rise to the narrative ("même s'il en fut autrement"). Des Forêts's writings, as those of the other poets of *L'Ephémère*, take the form of a poetic narrative that expresses another relation to history, a form that might act as history's corrective or its antidote. For des Forêts such a narrative might be capable of bringing about what *Ostinato* names "a radical inversion of thought" through which "le cours de l'histoire comme notre vision du monde s'en trouvent bouleversés" [the course of history and our vision of the world find themselves turned upside down] (287). Years earlier, in 1962, the journal *Tel quel* asked Louis-René des Forêts to describe his goals as a writer. He replied that one of these would be to express "through an ever-increasing concentration of the rhythmic elements, the internal pulsation, the scansion of being. In other words, it would be a matter of translating reality into a space of harmony favorable to the creation of new relations, and where would be affirmed, with the same evidence as in song, a secret modulation."[8] "The scansion of being" and "a secret modulation" arise from what des Forêts calls an ostinato-like narrative, where similar events recur, but in a form that is altered by their repetition in another temporal and spatial sequence in the text. One of the consequences of this narrative modulation is that it expresses Jacques Rancière's understanding of the methodological necessity for a "poetics of history" that is able to track the disruptive modulation between history as *mythos* and history as *logos*.[9]

In "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce," des Forêts characterized the narrative function of ostinato as capable of breaking with the circularity that is symptomatic of what he considered to be the impossibility of dialogue. Such a narrative arises from "les bas-fonds de la verbosité, là où la rigueur manque, où se fait entendre le plus insignifiant" [the shallows of verbosity, there where rigor is wanting, where one hears the most insignificant] (286). Though des Forêts recognized that such a narrative might be simply another literary dream, he also noted that it might push us to run the risk of "un dévoiement dont il ne resterait en dernière instance qu'à tirer la leçon" [a deviation whose lesson, in the final analysis, would only need to be drawn] (286). What returns from non-rigorous verbiage might be the same dream, but with an added chance incitement that characterizes the transition from a vain monologue to a new form of words ("une parole nouvelle") whose reason for being is derived from the fissures of insignificance produced in narrative meaning.

The desire to break with the odd circularity of narrative appears in the first sentence from *Les Mendiants* (1943), Louis-René des Forêts's first novel: "Paméla! The phonograph was spinning aimlessly and the alternating click was getting on my nerves, so I put on a new needle, because I could not stand to see a needle used twice, and I set the stylus on the edge of the record; the sun reflected off the nickel, and the Java that I loved started again, and I would have liked to dance, even though no one ever taught me to dance correctly like my brother who never missed a dance from which he brought back girls whose ways disgusted

me."[10] Paméla is a dog; the record played a Java, with whose end the novel, forever in need of being rewound, begins. *Les Mendiants* begins with the alternating mechanical skipping sound of a phonograph's stylus endlessly running through the record's repeating final groove. It begins with the fascination for the unstoppable repetition of the same. In his attempt to recapture the original in mass-produced Java music, the fetish of *Les Mendiants*'s youthful narrator, Guillaume, is to replace the nickel stylus after each record, since he cannot bear using the same needle twice. Never mind that the newly placed needle simply reiterates the same musical reproductive mechanism, Guillaume's beloved Java music is selfsame since "a Java, it was always Java, no one interrupted a Java" (14). Fascination for music is omnipresent in *Les Mendiants*, whose various characters are portrayed as records or as their players. Guillaume's grandfather, for instance, "spoke without stopping, like a record" (133), and his voice suddenly stops "after a fading inflection, like a record on a phonograph that had not been rewound all the way" (212). *Les Mendiants* is structured in three parts, divided into thirty-five sections, alternating between the narratives of eleven of the novel's characters. As such, the compositional structure of *Les Mendiants* answers in the affirmative Maurice Blanchot's question to des Forêts in his essay "L'Influence du roman américain" (1943): "In maintaining the unity of a certain form—which is also his own style—between these different narratives, did the author try to make us understand that his heroes were simultaneously isolated and alike; alike without ever being able to become aware of this similarity since they are similar only through their isolation?"[11] Indeed, each narrative seems caught in its own groove, winding down and reaching its end, only to be replaced by another, same, narrative. The novel's characters spin circles in their own solitude, producing monologues that express what des Forêts, by way of referring to Blanchot in a letter from 1943, called an incommunicable point of view. In this same letter, he also suggested that the fate of each character is to traverse a narrow tunnel from which "he desperately tries to get out and in which he speaks only for himself."[12] The seemingly paradoxical attempt to communicate the incommunicable explains both the circular turn of events and the inexorable solitude encountered by the characters of des Forêts' works: the singularity of what they attempt to communicate is

overdetermined by the circularity that ensues in attempting to communicate it. Des Forêts concluded his letter by agreeing with Maurice Blanchot's review of *Les Mendiants*: "the deep mode of their language is indeed a monologue: it cannot be a dialogue. As Blanchot said in a remarkable study of my book whose penetrating formulas I can only borrow: they are unable to authentically go from saying *I* to saying *you*."[13]

In *Les Mendiants*, Guillaume pursues his fascination with music by distinguishing between two forms of song. The first arises from "a deep voice [that] psalmed a song that disappeared right away" (17). As opposed to this enigmatic and soothing voice, another music is described as "barbarous," harsh, and mixed with the stench of the port that smells "of petrol, of rotten mackerel, the heavy stench of dust and oil and the spiritless debris of hurdy-gurdies" (90; 209). Guillaume is the first of des Forêts's characters to come under the spell of a psalmlike song and of a voice that inspires a strange and anguishing "allégresse" giving rise to dreams: "I closed my eyes, it seemed to me that the soft and peaceful voice would lull me to sleep, and I imagined myself in the shadow of palm trees, bare chested, surrounded by young girls with long, long hair; decidedly, I'm too much of a dreamer" (22). Yet, when the description of this exotic oneiric world becomes too precise—"with *long, long* hair" [des chevelures *très, très* longues]—this Baudelairean dream breaks off. As in Baudelaire's poems "Parfum exotique" (25) and "Chevelure" (26–27), some decidedly too exotic and too romantic perfume governs the images proposed by Guillaume's narrative. His reverie gives way to images that at first seem as powerful and as sovereign as those André Breton had proposed to envision in Baudelaire's *Paradis artificiels*, where poetry produces images that are no longer evoked by man "but offer themselves to him, spontaneously, despotically. He cannot rid himself of them, since the will no longer has any strength, and is no longer in control of its faculties."[14] Yet, Guillaume does claim to chase away these images and to reject the despotism of involuntary aesthetic experience ("decidedly, I'm too much of a dreamer"). Nevertheless, des Forêts also doubts such claims to master the unmasterable, since Guillaume's stated ability to dissipate despotic images might be simply another narrative phantasm.

The character from *Les Mendiants* known simply as

"L'Etranger" also questions his ability to avoid being taken in by the lure of powerful images: "I remain intimately persuaded that disillusionment reigns, at least if we admit that there is never any illusion, which is to say belief in a divinity, in a destiny, or in a beauty whatsoever" (192). The Stranger is not so much intimately convinced of the world's bleakness, as he is uncertain as to whether or not his hypothesis is admissible. Can we say that illusion, divinity, and beauty have abandoned the world? Can we say that the mind's power of imagination and of recollection have finally succumbed to memory's objective reflective power? Is there such a thing as a narrative devoid of rhetorical figures purely based on a *logos*, and devoid of its share of myth? *Les Mendiants*'s Stranger is the first to recognize that his own hypothesis of absolute disillusionment fails before certain images that succeed in penetrating his memory to the "point of vertigo" when he is overcome by the force of images that represent "a period when I had given myself over to life body and soul, to the point of losing consciousness, to plainly believing in this poison, drama, that dominated all my adolescent acts" (193). The images that permeate the Stranger's memory with such vertiginous power seem almost divine. As such, they contradict his hypothesis of the world's desolation.

As had the Stranger, the narrator of des Forêts's second novel, *Le Bavard* (1946), finds himself "in the same dilemma as the Sorcerer's Apprentice; the machine goes round and round to no purpose, and he is unable to control its wayward movements."[15] The Bavard also distinguishes between two forms of dreams, images, and music. The first, his favorite, are sublime musical works that "exercise over me a dominion from which I do not try to escape; I'm inclined therefore to think that through them alone can I reach my own peak"(122). The "dominating virtue" of these works is "sublime" in the sense that they carry the narrator toward his own peak or limit. They are sublime and didactic, proposing an initially conceptless and overwhelming exterior force to which the narrator submits, only to learn that this force is sublime only because he deems it so. The Bavard thus recognizes, in mock Kantian fashion, that these works are emblematic of his freedom to produce an emotion that had initially deprived him of his freedom.

Another form of music in *Le Bavard* expresses an elemental

force capable of absolutely mastering reason. Initially, the narrator describes this music as a mere pretender to the sublime, and he admits that he is "infinitely suspicious of the heady emotion that, provided the setting and circumstances are favorable, I get from hearing rather trivial works [œuvrettes sans importance], revoltingly sentimental or falsely pathetic" (122). Far from sublime, these "œuvrettes" nevertheless do move the narrator beyond his will: "if I'm not careful I am liable to be overcome by a frenzy of melancholy or delight that I cannot in all honesty approve" (123). Though the Bavard might pretend to resist the power of this music, it renders him a helpless and "absurd weeper" (123) who is incapable of overcoming the power of such music. He is reduced to this helpless state when he hears a children's choir whose voices seem to express "utter indifference to human suffering"; voices that are "ideal, in short, like whatever suggests the existence of a harmonious world, incommensurable with our own copy of it, which can never be more than its wretched simulacrum" (124–25).[16] The song of the children's choir is also a form of Baudelairean "Invitation au voyage," an invitation to a dream world of luxurious harmonies. For the Bavard, something seemingly quasi-sacred in this song exceeds the power of the narrator's preferred sublime works. The voices become celestial, angelic, and the source for a singular experience: "I felt it could only be granted to a very small number of the elect to hear them; no doubt one had to be in a fitting state to receive them, and the flattering conviction took shape in my mind that since I enjoyed so rare a privilege, I must have been judged worthy of it; better still, it was destined to me alone" (119–20). The narrator cannot escape the seductive phantasm created by this "simple" music whose echoing voices seem to communicate with one another, and to promise the narrator an escape from his own monologue. For, or so it momentarily seemed, these voices are calling out solely to the Bavard: "calling me with their echoing responses, and I could not, had I wished to, escape their spell. It was for me that those voices were ringing out so urgently" (136). The children's choir first seems to emanate from another world: "at first, I could have sworn these voices came from heaven or from the far ends of the world" (119), and the song's power is such that it took the Bavard's "breath away. And as it reached its climax, dizziness overwhelmed me, and some force seemed to

sweep me forward. Conscious of my weakness, and moreover spellbound, I offered no resistance" (137). Yet, if the dose of *surenchère* in the previous passages were not already obvious (the voices intimate the whispers of sacred wings heard by a select few disposed to hearing them), the narrator's sudden suggestion that he "pretended [je feignis par jeu] to turn a deaf ear to them and stood motionless, with my eyes fixed on the ground" (136) perverts the narrative structure, as did Guillaume's recognition of his own hyperbolic reverie in *Les Mendiants*. The Bavard's interpretation plays to his vanity, and he himself admits "this delightful illusion lasted only for an instant" (120).

As with his fascination for "œuvrettes sans importance," the Bavard is equally taken with all outward display of emotion, regardless of the circumstances motivating it. Like the Stranger, the Bavard is almost unable to resist seizing the first opportunity to witness "the scene of any popular demonstration, where I might be in a position to observe on people's faces all the characteristic signs of passion—caring little whether it is aroused by foolish admiration or unjustified resentment. Yet, the fear of being myself carried away by a powerful stream of anger or enthusiasm, by reason of my very faculty of sympathy and despite the self-control I have vowed to maintain, sometimes prevents me from yielding to this impulse" (26). The possibility of catharsis has become or remains so ubiquitous that any given popular demonstration is no longer the site of potential action, but of pleasurable and impassive contemplation of the spectrum of human passions. Yet, for fear of being carried away by these same passions, the Bavard also tries to avoid such demonstrations, as though he did not believe his own Nietzschean determination that the "deepest pathos can indeed be merely aesthetical play."[17] Des Forêts is not proposing that "modernity is without a cathartic solution,"[18] but that the ubiquity of this solution contributes to a disastrous disengagement from everyday events, to our inability both to invest ourselves in any given event and to distinguish between the event and its simulacrum.

Again in *Les Mendiants*, the character named Grégoire, an actor who occasionally plays the Shakespearean role of Othello, tells his Desdemona, Hélène, that the spectators of their performance want to be transported. They want to be "swept off their feet, not moved" (79). With reference to Grégoire's "grand

stormy voice, and grand mimicry" (80), Hélène reduces him to the level of the dog Paméla, by responding: "who could take such barking seriously?" (79). When Hélène steps out or reverses her role as Desdemona and shoots Grégoire out of jealousy, his not-so-secret lover Annabelle also succumbs momentarily to the sinister passion of disengaged contemplation: "when I saw Grégoire collapse before the door, I was shaken by the sort of nervous emotion one receives from beautiful works; and surprise, an essential element of aesthetic pleasure, only heightened the emotion" (296–97). Annabelle is so shaken with pleasure by these all too real *coups de théâtre* that she suddenly senses that "time had never been so dense, so heavy, so mysterious, and I imagined that I had been transported into a dream where everyone had their part to play" (300). Annabelle's imagination sweeps her off into a theatrical world, one of aestheticized time or timeless time, where every instant seems laden with meaning and destiny: mythical instants. Annabelle enters a theatrical world similar to the one Guillaume and the Bavard momentarily succumb to, a world of aesthetic experience. Grégoire is perhaps dead, yet Annabelle is in the same state as the Bavard, who proclaimed himself "as innocent as an honest spectator in a theater can be with regard to the bloody tragedy being played out ten feet away" (46). Yet, other characters in des Forêts's novels seek to reject the possibility that such unresponsive disinterestedness is purely involuntary. In *Les Mendiants*, for instance, the Stranger resists being vanquished by fiction, to suggest that his life cannot be wholly reduced to aesthetic contemplation: "it was not my style to savor the situation as would an aesthete since my life was at stake, which is, after all, more precious than the most beautiful art in the world" (155). Des Forêts's early novels, as Bonnefoy's early poetry, thus develop the experience of a dual temptation to both embrace the lure of art as a form of truth (*logos*), and to reject it as pure fiction (*mythos*).

Fourteen years following *Le Bavard*, Louis-René des Forêts published several narratives under the title *La Chambre des enfants* (1960). One of these, "Une Mémoire démentielle," evokes a singular, intimate, and incommunicable form of imagination. Confronted with this imagination of past events, narration fails to truthfully recount a specific past event that is irreducible to narrative structures, since it is susceptible neither to the rigors

of objective demonstration nor to mythological flights of fancy: "Neither the extravagances [dérèglements] of the imagination nor a concern for rigorous demonstration can mutilate or disguise the past, which remains inalterable."[19] The problem with these Rimbaldian "dérèglements" of the imagination is that they present a pure fiction (*mythos*) as though it were the true recounting of past events: "If he sees today, *as if he had actually been there*, what he never saw except in dreams, it is because he is the bewitched and docile prey of a stream of irrefutable images" (117).[20] Yet, as for the Stranger and the Bavard, the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" also senses there are other images of the past that can disrupt his bewitched docility and that denounce and disarm the illusory products of imagination (125).

Rather than either a purely fictional or a purely truthful narrative, the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" suggests that a third form of narration presents fictional images that denounce their own illusion. He nevertheless concludes that his attempt to create what he calls "une parole nouvelle" is impossible since "a fictitious past has already taken the place of a real past, about which he is certain of nothing, not even whether it was real" (128). In one final attempt, however, he believes he has evoked something similar to the "secret modulation" that des Forêts referred to in his interview with *Tel quel* (1962). This modulation arises from "a new and perhaps impossible requirement," and from the recognition that "certain images of the past are more impossible to express than the pure products of imagination and dream" (128). The narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" is obsessed by this new (perhaps impossible) constraint, whose main characteristic is that it distinguishes between images of the past and self-referential products of the imagination. Rather than a series of self-destructing images, these tenacious images also answer to the perhaps impossible constraint that des Forêts had alluded to in the letter from 1943, to communicate incommunicable images "to another" [à autrui]. In the case of "Une Mémoire démentielle," however, the other is the present-self of narration seeking to communicate the events of its past-self through their "faithful translation into a language that is accessible to a man who remembers, since it is what he would say today as it had been said by the child that he was" [l'enfant qu'il fut] (110).

As witnessed in *Les Mendiants*, there remains the risk that the

particularly new obsession encountered by the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" might be merely the repetition of the same. Unable to dissociate the recollection of an event from its fictional reconstruction (his attempts to remember always fall back in the same groove of the imaginary), the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" sets out to communicate the impossibility of communicating his memories: "[He] substituted rash conjectures, sophisticated glosses, or flights of impure lyricism for that which his failing memory too often withheld from him—from that which leaves one's pen powerless. In almost every case he was moved by an aesthetic intention rather than a concern for truth" (129–30). Previous readings of "Une Mémoire démentielle" emphasize that des Forêts presents language as an imperfect tool capable only of impure recollections, and irremediably tied up in both the intertextual and the "fabulaic." They also suggest that des Forêts underscores the urgency of establishing the primacy of a reasoned recollection of events, one capable of thwarting the aesthete's recourse to artifice. These readings present various dichotomies to distinguish aesthetic intention from a concern for truth; dichotomies such as the intertextual and intersubjective; "fabulaic" and critical discourses; the aesthetic realm of the simulacrum and hermeneutical ontology; or the lucid and mythological layers of writing.[21] Each of these dichotomies pits "le non-advenu" against "l'advenu." For des Forêts, however, these apparent polar opposites cannot be separated and opposed to one another. They communicate with one another through what he termed a "strange osmotic relationship," through which *as if* and *as is* are on equal footing, and whereby the historical subject is neither dissipated nor ever fully emerges from its passage through the aesthetic of narrative form. Thus, for des Forêts, a certain ambiguity persists in the reason of memory, one that defines a literary field that is reducible neither to the delirium of the mythical ("le non-advenu") nor to this delirium's absolute eradication ("l'advenu").

The narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" suggests that in almost every case he submits to aesthetic intentions, rather than to an ethical *souci de vérité*. Thus, this statement, too, might have arisen from the fiction of aesthetic intention, rather than out of concern for truthfully recounting past events. Both the Bavard and the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" present us with

the timeworn dilemma, how to believe someone who tells us they are lying or how to believe a narrator who attempts to tell us that the truth of his narrative is that it is purely fictional. In fact, the narrator's odd tale nearly intersects with Kierkegaard's dialectical consideration of aesthetic and ethical discourse: "To bring back to oneself the past by enchantment is not so difficult as to remove from oneself by enchantment the object nearest to one for the sake of recollecting it. This properly is the art of recollection, employing reflection raised to the second power."[22] Kierkegaard proposed a dynamic of reflection within imagination; one that is opposed to both illusion and to absolute reflective consciousness wholly dissociated from the power of illusion. In the case of illusion, there can be neither memory nor remembrance of an event; and in the case of absolute reflective consciousness, there are simply empty memories lying in what Kierkegaard called a "depot for damaged wares."[23] As opposed to these two possibilities, "recollection" occurs only when the event is reflected (upon) within the enchanting realm of imagination. As both Kierkegaard and des Forêts would concede, this is a difficult proposition.

Recollection, like des Forêts's "secret modulation," represents the interplay between illusion and reflection. The narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" can thus be described as attempting to not subjugate the ontological to the aesthetic, which is quite the contrary from readings of des Forêts's narratives that suggest one no longer focus on the function of the subject and of memory. Rather than renouncing its ontological status, the subject founds it on its own figuration as simulacrum. The inability to differentiate between reflection and illusion, between memory and imagination, or between dreamed and lived experience does not, however, obliterate the subject's ontological status. Rather, this status comes from the indissociability of these seemingly antinomial terms. In other words, the "parole nouvelle" is neither purely aesthetic nor wholly ontological: it remains a dream, but one that "incites." Rather than the fusion of imagination and historical event, des Forêts proposes a scission of the imaginative function that is neither the attempt to destroy the distinction between imagination and event (dreaming without ever waking) nor the attempt to absolutely distinguish between these two realms (being awake without a trace of a dream). The scission between waking and dreaming is closer to the following verses from

Yves Bonnefoy's collection *Ce qui fut sans lumière* (1987): "Que faire de tes dons, ô souvenir, / / Sinon recommencer le plus vieux rêve, / Croire que je m'éveille?" [What to do with your gifts, O memory, / / Except begin again the oldest dream, / Believe I am waking] (11). The oldest dream is also what Kierkegaard called the timeless realm of illusion "where it is ever twilight and never dawns."[24] Similarly, throughout des Forêts's writings, the ontological subject is neither entirely dissolved nor does it ever fully emerge untouched from its passage through the aesthetic realm. Nor is the passage from sleeping to waking or from illusion to reflection self-evident or definitive, let alone simply the means to an end. The narrator of "Dans un miroir" (published in *La Chambre des enfants*) suggests that "memory does far more than erase, mutilate, or misrepresent the recollection of our words, it throws us off track [nous donne le change], through a sort of discretionary power."[25] Memory is not solely a positive recollective force capable of revealing, in the present, a past event. Memory is also the power to forget, to throw one's consciousness off track ("se donner le change") in the attempt to "truly" represent past events.

Des Forêts's narrative entitled "La Chambre des enfants" also evokes the dream landscape of "Une Mémoire démentielle" and of "Dans un miroir." The narrator, Georges, is possessed of and by an oneiric knowledge that dispossesses him of the will to come out from his hiding place behind a door leading to the children's room. In accordance with this oneiric logic, born of the dreamer's imagination but over which the dreamer is powerless, Georges's lack of will is interpreted as something he himself has willed. He "feels he knows everything, but can do nothing";[26] a feeling that arises from within illusion, whose most damning power is that it makes one feel as though one knew everything; as though one could lucidly reflect on and absolutely recall any and every past event. In illusion, the absolutely subjected will envisions itself as the absolute master of consciousness. But the dream world of absolute contemplation also deprives Georges of the power to act and communicate. The indicative voice of the narrative thus blends into the conditional logic of dreams through which Georges, like the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle," becomes "the bewitched and docile prey of a stream of irrefutable images" (117).

When confronted with his apparent failure to precisely account for past events, the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" concludes that "the complexity of the formal problems numbed his memory, threw him into the unreality of fiction, into the nebulous substance of dreams" (129). "La Chambre des enfants," on the other hand, seems to conclude with Georges's escape from the nebulous substance of dreams. Yet, he only *seems* to "come to" and to wake from his dream:

> That is when he came back to himself to remember with exhilaration that his name was Georges. Opening his eyes, he saw the young Paul burst into his room. He saw him lean toward his ear to smilingly inform him that someone, downstairs, wanted to speak to him.
>
> "To speak to me, did you say, little one, to me, to speak with me?"
>
> And, as he got up hurriedly, he again saw the child smile, but this smile was far off, indecipherable. (90)

At the beginning of "La Chambre des enfants," Georges had been unable to speak. He was even incapable of answering to his own name. Yet, it would be inaccurate to read the narrative's conclusion as an unadorned break with the impersonal world of illusion. In fact, Georges has not snapped out of illusion to emerge into the intersubjective world of action and dialogue, and the fiction thus does not serve as the dialectical detour at the end of which one emerges into the "real." Rather, "La Chambre des enfants" is based on a narrative that parallels Kierkegaard's eternal twilight.[27] The conclusion of "La Chambre des enfants" seems to suggest that Georges has woken from his dream or that the child, Paul, has burst through his dream, thus allowing Georges to come to. Yet the formal makeup of this passage says otherwise: Georges "came back to himself to remember with exhilaration [allégresse] that his name was Georges." Georges's exhilaration suggests that he has indeed woken from a bad dream, but the scene's description remains oneiric: he sees his nephew, as though from a distance, leaning toward his ear, smilingly informing him that someone wishes to speak to him. The perspective is still third-person, with Georges as its subject, yet his perception is as dreamlike as if he were to see someone coming up from behind: Georges "saw the young Paul burst into his room" [vit le jeune Paul faire irruption dans sa chambre]. This scene models

the irruption of imagination into consciousness that disrupts the logic of Georges's perception: he sees himself "comme s'il y était." The narrative also emphasizes the persistence of the oneiric through an accumulation of first- and second-person pronouns in the interrogative: "To speak to *me*, did *you* say, little one, to *me*, to speak with *me*?" thereby overdetermining the impression that Georges is now awake and responsive to the possibility of communicating.

Louis-René des Forêts's works thus confront literature as intersubjective dialogue *and* literature as semiotic *dérive*. Though Paul's smile ("far off, indecipherable") did strike Georges as he hurried off to speak with an unknown third party, the narrative structure of this conclusion disrupts Georges's hasty and hopeful momentum. On the verge of plunging into the possibility of dialogue, Georges is equally on the verge of sinking back into the subterranean tunnel des Forêts described in 1943, a tunnel from which "he desperately tries to get out and in which he speaks only for himself."[28] Georges's spirit is on the verge of absolute knowledge, whose corollary is absolute powerlessness or, worse yet, death. His state is also similar to the one Adorno ascribes to the purely aesthetic subject who "begins to circle aimlessly, imprisoned within itself, released from every element of resistance, upon whose permeation it was solely dependent for its meaning."[29] Similarly, Stéphane Mallarmé's "Igitur" (1869), who believed "only in the existence of the Absolute, imagines himself everywhere in a dream (he acts from the perspective of the Absolute) and finds action useless since chance does and does not exist" (442). Georges risks falling into the circular realm of disinterested aesthetic judgments whose corollary is absolute interest in and fascination for this realm. He risks becoming a prisoner of the very aesthetic distance he would pretend to appropriate. "La Chambre des enfants" concludes with Paul's "indecipherable" smile, yet this conclusion does not indicate that the story has fallen back into the realm of absolute illusion. Rather than announcing either absolute reality or absolute illusion, Paul's smile is a warning posted at the border between waking and sleeping. It is a liminal image, bordering on the "indecipherable" insignificance of dreams, and the repetition of this warning in varying contexts throughout des Forêts's writings might be what distinguishes perfect circularity from an ostinato.

Des Forêts's narratives move between two difficultly differentiated models: infinite repetition and eternal return. As Maurice Blanchot noted in *L'Espace littéraire*, such "twilight narratives" are not dialectical, for the absolutely simple reason that "the time of time's absence is not dialectical."[30] Nor is "La Chambre des enfants" an instance of what Pascal Quignard calls "fictions that distort their own powers and destroy themselves to the point of demonstrating the core of the real that ensures that they can function."[31] Such an understanding presupposes that literature produces a form of obedient narrative fiction that reveals or "denatures" its own pretension to appear natural, or that it undermines its own fictional structure (*mythos*) for the sake of an underlying *logos*. For des Forêts, on the contrary, these fictions repeatedly move between waking and dreaming, to the point that the two poles are indistinguishable. If these narrative fictions do reveal some truth, then it lies in what des Forêts has called the "secret modulation" between these repeated and indestructible fictions.

In "Les Grands moments d'un chanteur," published in *La Chambre des enfants*, both the charm of the voices heard by the Bavard and the spellbinding song of spurned love heard by Guillaume in *Les Mendiants* take the form of the vocal interpretations of Molieri, a musician become opera singer by obscurely brutal means. Without understanding a word of the German in Weber's romantic opera, *Freischütz*, Molieri "transfigures" it into a wild drama "that strikes us as the projection of what is the most elemental in us, our terrors, our hallucinations."[32] In his interpretation "everything took place at the level of the surnatural . . . in a setting of fairy-tale darkness" (27–28). Molieri's voice projects the listener's most terrifying and hallucinatory states. It also gives rise to a terrifying experience similar to the one that the narrator of "Une Mémoire démentielle" was subjected to as a youth singing in a children's choir. At first, the child felt "that old elementary jubilation that comes from communion through song (and even if its character is religious, its power acts even on the least religious), but also the instinctive fear of being dominated by this jubilation to the point of reckless intoxication where the mind bows and gives up trying to oppose what can destroy it" (112). As with the Bavard's fear of being carried away by strange passions seemingly foreign to his being, as a child, the narrator of

"Une Mémoire démentielle" feared the "elementary jubilation" born of this communal song. He feared its power to vanquish his reason and spirit.

In his interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Molieri's voice is said to be capable of such unprecedented acrobatics as to easily negotiate "the widest musical scales, to go down and then up to the most inaccessible notes or, depending on the role's demands, to indifferently sing the part of the bassist, the baritone, or the tenor" (11). His voice is the stuff of fairy tales and fabulous operas. It is literature's impossible product, bearing the power of "bewitching images," as though Molieri's throat were the site of a natural organic upheaval of which one can only say "c'est ainsi . . . même s'il en fut autrement": "It was said that everything happened as though the gullet [gosier] of our singer had been the theater for an organic upheaval, perhaps of a cellular nature, which had endowed it with an exceptional elasticity" (11). Fairy tale or no fairy tale, Molieri's voice does have the power to rally "thousands of spectators" who are "the consenting victims of the same mirage," and who consent to the despotism of an actor who, with the complicity "of the footlights, of travesty, and of the fiction of which he was the hero," is placed in a privileged world, and invested with "an almost divine grandeur" (20). In one final disastrous performance of *Don Giovanni*, Molieri evokes the literal meaning of *dramma giocoso* by interpreting this work as the beginning of the end of opera.[33] His performance seeks to turn out the footlights of opera; and, like des Forêts's narratives, it wishfully points toward a rupture or breach in the smooth ubiquity of indifferent aesthetic experience. It points to "une parole nouvelle," in order to direct our attention away from such assertions as the Bavard's that "it was pleasant to think that I could in all quietude enjoy the pleasure of watching a bit of life without being required to take part in it" (24–25).

Throughout his writings, des Forêts suggests that perhaps literature can be more than a strange comedy, and more than the recordlike mimicry of intersubjectivity witnessed by *Les Mendiants*' Grégoire saying: "*Everyone follows his own path, everyone follows his own path . . . and the paths do not cross*" (164); and by Hélène answering: "I suppose this was a quotation (he answers difficult questions with quotations)" (164). What might allow the reader to escape from this mimicry is what the Bavard called "a

perfume of disaster in the air" (67), a strange scent that might elude the aesthete's sweet tooth for the mimicry of catharsis. In *Les Mendiants*, the character known simply as Fred also perceives a trace of this perfume during *Othello*'s murderous conclusion: "*Something* was obviously missing, the terror had not been evoked on time . . . it had not lunged for the spectators' throat; but they guessed that this *something* was out there somewhere, swelling and ready to erupt as soon as they had turned their backs on it" (193–94).[34] Des Forêts's works thus perpetually evoke the possibility that the object of contemplation might rebel against its passive status and strike out against the observer; a rebellion often marked by a silence, such as the one that preceded Hélène's shooting Grégoire: "there was a long silence, and it seemed to me that this silence expressed the shadow of disaster" (268).

The perfume or shadow of disaster might have hovered over the performance of Webern's *Second Cantata, op. 31* and Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum* at the Domaine Musical in Paris on 10 November 1956, which des Forêts reviewed for *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. His introductory remarks question whether the works of Stravinsky and Webern were up to the challenge posed by the day's events. Can one possibly listen to these compositions on 10 November 1956, the day of the Soviet invasion of Hungary? Could these works hold up to what he described as "the ordeal of the realities to which we were the overwhelmed witnesses, and wouldn't submitting these works to this ordeal bring about a radical reconsideration of our judgment of their composers?"[35] Des Forêts also suggested that the winds of idiocy and destruction blowing over Europe in November 1956 were the historical variant of a perfume of disaster: "never had the victims' cries been heard so loudly, and this time the professional liars were not able to stifle them. If I insist on the exceptional climate in which this concert took place, it is because it may have had, it necessarily did have a determining influence on the sensibility of even those listeners who were the most resolved not to let aesthetic problems depend on the urgent problems that arise as of what we could call, without the slightest pejorative nuance, current events" (37). For des Forêts, it was Webern's composition that best answered to the historical events weighing on the world on

10 November 1956. It alone gave an "authentic expression to the musical art of our times" (37). Des Forêts concluded that Stravinsky's serial mode of composition had failed to transform the musical work as a whole, since it relied on mere virtuosity that feared running the risk inherent in what des Forêts called "truly creative research" (38). Des Forêts likened Webern's compositional style to Stéphane Mallarmé's in that he gave "back to language its musical dignity," and was in search of "[something] like the very essence of music" (39). Furthermore, by expressing "the musical emblem of silence," Webern's work questioned "the essence of language" (40), thus putting his musical composition on par with literary composition.

Des Forêts's review of Stravinsky and Webern is obviously more than a casual appreciation of an afternoon concert at the Domaine Musical. It concerns des Forêts's own reaction as a writer to the coincidence of historically momentous events and aesthetic experience. His reaction parallels, in fact, those he attributes to the characters of his novels and short stories. In his interview with *Tel quel* (1962), des Forêts noted that "the power music always has held over me is probably related to the fact that it proceeds, more so than any other art, according to the rules of death."[36] Music, in other words, is linked to the event to end all events and all mimesis: death. More precisely, des Forêts expressed his interest in the "incandescent passions" of opera, whose characters "always move about in a domain that is distinct and superior to reality, and who become, as the action progresses, grandiose and hypercharged beings capable of transgressing all limits, after which there is nothing left for them to do but die, and this death always has the meaning of a purification."[37]

In "Une Écriture de notre temps" (1988), Yves Bonnefoy suggested that des Forêts's works exhibited several distinct forms of music. Most notably in *Le Bavard*, but also in "Une Mémoire démentielle," he perceives a music whose function is religious, and that is interrupted by the emancipatory song of a bird perched on the ledge of a church window: "through the priests' music, the bird's song resounds with the world's joy, with the pure joy of origin, through the half-opened window above the haze of the incense."[38] Yet for Bonnefoy, the bird's rebellious song remains linked to myth and fiction: "What was affirmed and reaffirmed in this moment when an entire tradition had been mobilized against

him, is the experience of the self [du moi], at its most instinctively autonomous level, when it is most fiercely centered on its own illusion"(125). As opposed to *Le Bavard*'s mythologically grounded rebellion, "Les Grands moments d'un chanteur" demonstrates what Bonnefoy calls "another vow of silence" (156) that is the opposite of the illusory experience of emancipation witnessed in *Le Bavard* and "Une Mémoire démentielle." With regards to this second musical form, Bonnefoy proposes the following Baudelairean formulation of the role of opera in des Forêts's works: "When a major signifier such as opera is at stake, all of our being is in question and mobilized" (148).[39] He also suggested that this other vow of silence "is not destined to preserve, as was the schoolboy's vow in 'Une Mémoire,' a mythological rapport to oneself. This vow seems rather to be the effect of a rupture that the realm of the ethical can produce—to use Kierkegaard's words—when it runs up against aesthetic reveries" (156).[40] Rather than valorizing what Dominique Rabaté calls "the presence of the sensible world,"[41] Bonnefoy's essay more subtly and problematically suggests that des Forêts's works embody "the site of the syncopation of being in words" (144). If there is a transition from the bird's disruptive song in *Le Bavard* to the child's voice in "Une Mémoire démentielle" and then to the voice of Molieri (disrupting the inebriating and overly proud voice of the bird and the child), Bonnefoy errs, nevertheless, when he suggests that Molieri's operatic voice "has destroyed the level where the illusory unfolds and lures the listener into idolatry" (163). He is equally mistaken in concluding that Molieri's voice "has touched truth" (163); which is to overlook des Forêts's own criticism of the mythological power of art and music. As early as *Les Mendiants* (1943), Guillaume had exclaimed: "decidedly, I'm too much of a dreamer" (22). Even the first sentence of *Les Mendiants* points to a nondialectical impasse or cavern in which the subject's consciousness, rather than progressing toward truth, merely "goes round in circles," as des Forêts writes in the first lines of his *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* (1988).[42]

In 1967, Louis-René des Forêts published the poem entitled *Les Mégères de la mer*, whose youthful narrator obsessively searches for the trace origins of his own enigmatic childhood: "Et dans ma mémoire souffrante qui est mon seul avoir / Je cherche où l'enfant que je fus a laissé ses empreintes" [And in my suffering

memory which is my only belonging / I search for where the child that I was left his imprints].[43] For Maurice Blanchot, these imprints disclose the traces "not of what has taken place, but of what has never happened. This keeps us away from Proust's memories, involuntary memories, gloriously seized upon again and capable of fending off the death that art had brought back to life."[44] As opposed to Proustian involuntary remembrance, des Forêts evokes the perpetual temptation of resurrecting the past through means that also question and (attempt to) reject the desire to resurrect it. What has taken place ("ce qui a eu lieu") also might be indissociable from what never happened ("ce qui ne s'est jamais passé").

In *Les Mégères de la mer*, the sober rejection of phantasm is also the attempt to break with the hypnotic fascination of both beauty and myth: "Tant de regret en moi qu'une mémoire impénitente / Nourrit mon hiver de vos mythologies défuntes! / Maintes fois depuis lors j'ai congédié votre image" [So many regrets in me that an impenitent memory / Feeds my winter with your vanished mythologies / Many times since I have dismissed your image] (24). The narrator tries to blind himself to the shrew whose image nevertheless persistently returns: "Vous reveniez hanter les parages / De mon âme dormante guettée par vos hypnoses" [You came back to haunt the areas / Of my sleeping soul spied upon by your hypnoses] (24). The attempt to repress the past's mythical return is linked to the dilemma of truthfully recounting past events through a narrative fraught with illusion and myth. Where all other dreams have failed, perhaps this one time we might have chanced upon "a dream that incites" us to recognize a narrative form that neither definitively dispels the dream nor remains at the level of this dream state where the self is reduced to a series of illusory reflections or simulacra. This one time, perhaps writing is not, as Dominique Rabaté believes it to be, "a voice obliged to undertake prodigious rhythmic intervals, and a narrative that has become the myth of the subject's timeless origin."[45] Rather than mythlike narratives, des Forêts's writings poetically narrativize myth in an attempt to disrupt the myth of the subject's infinite deferral.

The voice of the mythical shrew ("mégère") in *Les Mégères de la mer* is described as capable of rallying ("rameuter") her com-

panions, and her gaze as capable of mesmerizing the youthful narrator:

Et aux doux accords de son timbre, à sa très exquise injonction
Leur rage s'apaise comme sous l'opium s'endort la souffrance
Et dès lors—

Oh! je m'en souviens, ici ce fut désir
Et peur battant de pair quand je croisai son regard,
Son regard périlleusement doux qui vint me cueillir
Et me marquer de son chiffre comme au flanc d'un agneau. (19)

[And the sweet harmonies of her voice, her truly exquisite injunction
Their rage is appeased as suffering is quieted by opium
And then—

Oh! I remember, here was desire
And fear together when my gaze crossed hers,
Her perilously sweet gaze that came and plucked me
And marked me with its cipher as on the flank of a lamb.]

As witnessed by the hiatus after the words "And then —" the shrew's opium-laced songs wield the anesthetizing power of myth; and her voice charms the youthful narrator of *Les Mégères de la mer* in such a fashion that he becomes "Sourd aux garçons qui s'ensauvent par les hautes jachères / Abîmé dans le charme barbare de l'idiome hermétique" [Deaf to the boys fleeing through the fallow land / Plunged in the barbarous charm of the hermetic idiom] (14). Yet, the hiatus also dispels the witch's exquisite injunction. The midverse interruption of the poem after "Et dès lors" is followed by a blank space, then by the reemergence of memory through the exclamation "Oh! je m'en souviens, ici ce fut désir." The poem traces the subject's immersion in, and emergence from, myth and illusion, in a movement that might well be "a dream that incites." The charm of the shrew's song reveals that what matters is not so much whether these voices and gazes are celestial or hypnotic as: how do singular noncelestial voices give the impression of being infinite and celestial? How, in other words, could the listener or reader be, in Baudelaire's words, so "duped"?[46]

Twenty-one years following *Les Mégères de la mer*, Louis-René des Forêts published his *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* (1988), which begin by suggesting that we listen to the slight noise of someone or something nibbling and turning circles in the somber subterranean regions of its own head:

Écoutez-le qui grignote à petit bruit, admirez sa patience
Il cherche, cherche à tâtons, mais cherche.
Saura-t-il du moins mettre en ordre,
Débarrasser, décrasser les coins et recoins
De cette tête encombrée qui est la sienne
Où il tourne en rond sans trouver sa voix. (7)

[Listen to him making little gnawing noises, admire his patience
He is searching, groping along, but searching
Will he at least be able to put some order,
Clear out, clean out the nooks and crannies
Of this his cluttered head
Where he goes round in circles without finding his voice.]

The *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* evoke a region similar to the "narrow tunnel" that des Forêts had described in 1943 regarding *Les Mendiants*. Just as his first novel begins with a stylus skipping through a record's endless final groove, and just as the Bavard finds himself confronted with a mental machinery that "goes round and round to no purpose" (12), so too do the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* begin with someone or something turning in circles that are emblematic of aesthetic experience. The initial verses of des Forêts's *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* thus are no exception to the truism that the things and the characters in his works turn in circles. The circularity of these poems hinges on the narrator's obsession with the memory of a lost child who appears through insignificant though tenacious images, and through nocturnal dreams that do not necessarily seem, at first, to have anything to do with this child:

Mais une barque bleue enlisée dans la neige,
Le chahut de cinq cloches déréglées et fêlées,
Un train roulant à toute vapeur sur un pont de fer
La façade en feu d'une forteresse qui s'effondre,
De ces obsessions nocturnes aux formes si précises
Rien ne laisse deviner la provenance et la clé. (9)

[But a blue boat stuck in snow,
The din of five cracked, broken bells,
A train going full steam across an iron bridge,
The flaming facade of a crumbling fortress
Of these nocturnal obsessions whose forms are so exact
Nothing gives away their provenance and their meaning].

The origin or key to these obsessions is not forthcoming, yet subsequent verses offer several possible interpretations:

Elles disent pourtant que jamais l'angoisse ne s'endort,
Que toute les voies nous précipitent vers le pire
Là où ronflent les flammes, où sonne le glas,
A moins qu'elle n'aient pas plus de sens qu'une pierre
Ou qu'elles veuillent dire tout autre chose qui est
Qu'il faut tenir les yeux ouverts, tendre l'oreille
Au lieu de vivre à distance enfermé dans sa peur. (10)

[All the same they say that anguish never goes to sleep
That all paths lead to the worst
There where the flames roar, where the bell tolls,
Unless they make no more sense than a stone
Or mean something else altogether which is
Keep your eyes open, ears pricked up
Instead of living at a distance locked up with fear.]

The significance of these obsessions is both plural and contradictory. They are the sign of sleepless anguish and that all paths lead to the worst (depicted through flames and a death knell). These interpretations are nevertheless countered by the interjection "A moins que": unless these obsessions are as meaningless as a stone or are a call to vigilance: "Keep your eyes open, ears pricked up." Indeed, the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* also suggest that written images are worth

ce que valent des cailloux jetés dans un fleuve
Bien que les tenir pour tels conduise à leur substituer
Une forme de pouvoir autrement insidieuse,
Celle de l'inertie où l'orgueil, non plus à découvert
Mais comme une taupe poursuit son travail destructeur. (25)

[what stones thrown into a river are worth
Though considering them such leads to giving them

An even more insidious form of power,
Of inertia or pride, no longer in the open
But like a mole pursuing its destructive work.]

If the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* acquiesce to the possibility of a proud ("orgueil") interpretation of these images, they also suggest that this interpretation offers neither an aesthetic nor an ethical nor a religious answer. They suggest that no amount of words, no matter how they are arranged, will ever succeed in giving "un sens à l'énigme du non-sens" [a meaning to the enigma of nonsense] (43). Like Paul's smile in "La Chambre des enfants," the enigma remains "indecipherable."

In *Ostinato* (1997), the images of the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* become the purveyors of an unbearable past. They become, in des Forêts's words, atrocious in their charity, pointing to past events and bringing the past's affective impact to life in the present: "atroce charité des images que remue la mémoire encore chaude. Paroles, rires, échos de la joie ancienne qui résonnent dans un lointain intemporel, et s'effacent sans se faire oublier" [atrocious charity of images stirred up by a still avid memory. Words, laughter, echoes of the old joy resonating in a timeless background, and vanishing without being forgotten] (152–53). In "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce," these images also rebel against the false truth of factual evidence, and against a traditional "order of time" ("l'ordre du temps"), to such an extent that the subject of narration no longer distinguishes "ce qu'il est de ce qu'il fût ni de ce qu'il présume qu'il sera au seuil de la mort" [what he is from what he was nor from what he presumes he will be on the threshold of death] (289), and to the point that "c'est chaque fois la fiction qui triomphe comme si elle tenait seule, contre la grossière évidence des faits, le langage de la vérité" [each time fiction triumphs as though it alone upheld, against the crude evidences of facts, the language of truth] (289). In the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* such rebellious images reappear not only at night, but also in the sleep of day, since the imaginary is the realm in which one sleeps with one's eyes open: "A peine en rêve puisque les yeux restent ouverts" [Hardly in a dream since the eyes stay open] (27). In this sleep the impersonal third-person "one" senses a fearful anguish or a painful obsession "rending the heart" with a pain that he tries to escape by waking out of night

and into day. Yet the daytime sun is also described as the intoxicating fire of reason and forgetfulness:

> Il n'est que temps de remonter au soleil
> Le feu de son alcool purifie l'air
> On le boit à longs traits pour oublier celle
> Revenue la nuit déchirer le coeur
> Dire adieu de sa main enfantine,
> Une chandelle parfois tenue en l'air
> Qu'elle souffle comme à regret
> Mais sans s'attarder davantage
> Ni qu'on la voie disparaître.
>
> C'est elle encore souriant debout
> Parmi les asters et les roses
> Dans la pleine lumière de sa grâce
> Fière comme elle fut toujours
> Elle ne se fait voir qu'en rêve
> Trop belle pour endormir la douleur
> Avec tant de faux retours
> Qui attestent son absence. (11–12)
>
> [It is high time to go back to the sun,
> Whose fiery alcohol purifies the air
> One drinks long drafts to forget her
> Who returns at night to rend the heart
> To wave good-bye with her child's hand
> A candle at times held aloft
> Which she blows out with seeming regret
> But she never stays any longer than this
> Nor does one see her disappear.
>
> Her again standing and smiling
> Amid the asters and the roses
> In the full radiance of her grace
> As proud now as she ever was
> She makes herself seen only in dreams
> Too lovely to lull suffering to sleep
> With so many false returns
> Attesting to her absence.]

These verses indicate the full force of charitable and atrocious images: the beauteous female figure *makes herself seen* ("elle ne se fait voir") only in dreams in which the pain of loss will not and cannot rest. Her beauty exceeds the numbing sleep in and through which one sought to supplant her absence with an illusory dream-presence. She never definitively returns or appears, either in dreams or in waking. Nor is she ever fully ensnared in the sun's night of forgetfulness, but remains amorphous to (and in) the form such forgetfulness takes. The female figure appears as what Maurice Blanchot calls a figure that is "too real to last,"[47] which appears "without letting herself be forgotten" ("sans se faire oublier"). She is thus neither the pure illusion of the aesthetic nor a memory, but a figure who rebels against these poles. "Too real to last," her finite reality cannot be reduced to an eternal form or figure composed and imposed by memory, and as such she cannot be forgotten by memory since she never fully appears to its mediating power. Thus, rather than distracting one's attention from the female figure, the "long drafts" of forgetfulness drawn from the sun trace the contour of the child's infinite and unforgettable return. Like Paul in "La Chambre des enfants," the child in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* leaves an indecipherable trace, or what Maurice Blanchot calls "the trace of what has not taken place."[48]

If "one" tears oneself from sleep—"On s'arrache d'un coup de rein au sommeil" [One lurches headlong out of sleep] (10)—it is because "one" cannot bear a sleep that is no longer subjugated to what the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* also call the sun's law of forgetfulness. Indeed, such sleep overcomes memory's power to forget, and, within it, the traumatic image of the child's innocent beauty tears the self from another sleep, which is the institutional sleep of reasoned forgetfulness. In the grips of such an image, the subject prays for its return to the light of day—"Que vienne le jour" [Let the day come] (38):

> Le soleil là-haut est notre sauveur,
> L'ami du matin qui nous pousse hors du lit,
> Le miroir où les alouettes se font piéger,
> Le dieu d'or semant sa poudre trompeuse,
> Qu'on voit comme un gros œil rouge à son déclin
> Quand le moment approche de reprendre en main
> Les pièces de cet interminable procès,
> D'avoir à comparaître devant soi-même. (30)

[The sun up there is our savior
Morning's friend pushing us out of bed
The mirror where the owls are trapped
The golden god scattering his deceiving dust
That we see as a big red eye as it sets
When the moment nears to again take up
The documents of this interminable trial,
To have to appear before one's self.]

The sun's fire might purify "the heart's murky depths" (31), but its purifying power comes from "its fiery alcohol." It offers a drunk's lucidity, whose stupor attempts to mime the image's numbness by adapting an equally deceitful logic: "The golden god scattering his deceiving dust."

For Yves Bonnefoy, in "Une Écriture de notre temps," reason is a form of intoxication, as is all writing that is blind to its own fiction and that "believes in the reality of what it traces"(133). In the segment from *Ostinato* entitled "Voix bonnes mauvaises conseillères," des Forêts also qualified this truly memorable state of inebriation by suggesting that its lucidity is that of a blind man among the blind, and that "sous les dehors d'une rigueur implacable, elle n'est le plus souvent qu'abandon complaisant au pire dont on jouit avec la mauvaise ivresse d'un homme pris de boisson" [beneath the exteriors of an implacable rigor, it is most often only obliging abandon to the worst, which one enjoys as a drunk man his drunkenness] (49). Similarly, in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood*, the attempt to drunkenly mimic lucidity fails. The feminine figure's nightly returns are qualified as unrepresentable, and she has become what Blanchot calls "the unstable unknown of a representation without presence, a representation that refers to no model."[49] The figure haunting the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* violates all language that would attempt to describe, and thereby to freeze or to "coagulate," the moment of her return. Confronted with this unspeakable return, the sun makes for a poor refuge, and its bloodred sunset can only prefigure the agony of the coming timeless twilight and sleep in which the figure insistently returns. Indeed, the poet calls for the destruction of the sun's reason so that she can endlessly return and propel the subject into the realm of myth and illusion:

Non, elle est là et bien là,
Qu'importe si le sommeil nous abuse
Il faut se brûler les yeux,
Endurer cette douce souffrance,
Ebranler, perdre même la raison,
Détruire ce qui viendrait à détruire
L'apparition merveilleuse. (12)

[No, she is there, unmistakably there,
What does it matter if sleep deceives us
We want our eyes burnt out
To endure this sweet suffering
To shake, even to lose one's reason
To destroy entailing destroying
The wondrous apparition.]

Yet, the poem not only calls for the shock of reason, it also demands the dissolution of reason's destructive powers for the sake of the recollection of the marvelous apparition: "Accueillie comme on tremble / A la vue d'un visage saisi par la mort / Dans le dernier éclat de sa fleur" [Received the way one shudders / At the sight of a face seized by death / In the lingering splendor of its youth] (12).

The *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* shift away from the impersonal third-person "one" to the first-person plural "nous." "We" seek to give ourselves over to the apparition, even if this suggests suffering the abusive logic of dreams:

Elle est là pour veiller sur nous
Qui ne dormons que pour la voir
Quand par honte, par peur de nos larmes
Nous ne songeons le jour qu'à fuir dehors
Non sans guetter là aussi son retour
Et c'est en quête d'un mauvais refuge
Nous abrutir sous le soleil qui brûle. (12)

[She is there to watch over us
Who sleep only to see her
Whereas shamefaced and fearful of our tears
By day we dream of nothing but to escape outside
Not without spying, there too, her return
And it is to seek a poor refuge
To numb oneself under the burning sun.]

This community presupposed by the pronoun "we" engenders a utopian image that enables the subject to say of this absent apparition: "Non, elle est là et bien là / Qu'importe si le sommeil nous abuse" [No, she is there, unmistakably there / What does it matter if sleep deceives us] (13). What "we" pursue through this deceptive sleep and its dream apparitions is an absolute presence from which all suffering has expired; a presence devoid of the apprehension of the apparition's disappearance or absence. In this abusive sleep, "we" seek a realm in which to "sleep only to see her," which also implies that her marvelous apparition is reduced to a myth that is always already known in the endless twilight of illusion. As des Forêts writes in *Ostinato*: "jamais dans ses rêves il ne saura qu'elle est morte, comme si le rêve était le seul élément où elle pût se maintenir en vie—une vie cependant réduite, lacunaire, répétitive, sans autonomie propre ni unité, d'ailleurs aussitôt démentie par la déception du réveil, aussitôt recouverte par l'oubli qu'entraîne la reprise des devoirs quotidiens" [never in his dreams will he know that she is dead, as though dreaming were the only element in which she could remain alive—but a reduced life, discontinuous, repetitive, without any proper autonomy or unity; a life that is in fact belied by the disappointment that comes with waking, and that is buried forthwith under the forgetfulness born of daily obligations] (59). As with Yves Bonnefoy's poetry, the life that maintains itself in dreams is merely an "obscurely" poetic life from which life *and* death are lacking.

The marvelous apparition of the child in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* is more than the product of imagination's subordination to reason's forgetfulness. The child appears as do mortal, perishable figures that persist only as disappearing presence(s), and that rebel against our will to absolutely realize their presence in sleep's abusive realm of illusion.[50] Des Forêts again asks whether one must necessarily abandon the dream that fosters the myth of a child who can live forever in a past that is indissociable from the present:

> Un rêve, mais est-il rien de plus réel qu'un rêve?
> Faut-il se résigner à vivre sans rêver
> Que l'enfant aimantée vers ses lieux familiers
> Vient dans ce jardin de roses et chaque nuit
> Revient emplir la chambre de sa flamme
> Qu'elle nous tend comme une offrande et une prière? (13)

> [A dream, but is there anything more real than a dream?
> Must we agree to live without dreaming
> That the child drawn toward the places she knew
> Comes to this garden of roses, and each night
> Comes back to suffuse our room with the flame
> She holds out to us as an offering and a prayer?]

(Re)living past life through dreams and imagination reduces it to mechanical repetition. At one stage the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* reject this repetition, along with the lifeless communion implied by the waking dream called mourning, since the dead are as little likely to live on in our dreams as they are likely to "live" in cemeteries, and since "le vrai lieu des morts est nulle part" [the true place of the dead is nowhere] (59). At another, these poems embrace the myth of mourning and the dream of an endless communion with the dead. The child haunting *Les Mégères de la mer* and *Les Poèmes de Samuel Wood* also appears in *Ostinato* as an infant figure inhabiting a place whose vacancy belies the narrative fiction that evokes it. Yet, this place is suffused with recollections that tear one from the sleep of dreams *and* from memory's presumed lucidity: "La place est vide, hors de vue, mais toujours visible en son effacement, l'image de l'innocente beauté qui serre le cœur et revient à pas légers comme d'un autre espace l'arracher au sommeil" [The place is empty, out of sight, but always visible in its effacement, the image of the heartbreaking innocent beauty that comes back with its light step as though from some other space to tear him from sleep] (153).[51] Though far removed and empty, this place reverberates with the image's disappearance and with what *Ostinato* describes as a silent rupture uprooting all temporal references, thus ensuring that the past can be neither revealed nor invented. This place is in fact that of a poetic narrative where writing and event are indissociable.

In the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood*, the sun had sought to reduce the marvelous apparition to reason. But communion with the apparition had aimed at dissolving reason within a dream. In both cases, dream and reason become indistinguishable, for communion with the apparition implies the attempted destruction of that which allows the marvelous apparition to forever return without ever fully appearing. It becomes the attempted destruction of what the figure always keeps in reserve before reason's

destructive powers. What subsists as this reserve is what *Ostinato* calls "une part infime passée au crible d'une langue qui se cherche et cherche à s'en rendre maître, qu'elle modèle, tisse selon une loi que le hasard impose, ou parfois même suscite à partir de rien" [the smallest part that is sifted through a language that is both in search of itself and seeking to master this part, which it models and weaves according to a law that chance imposes; or it even creates this part out of nothing] (47).[52] To destroy this reserve or "part infime" would mean to create a realm akin to Kierkegaard's twilight; one *Ostinato* characterizes as "the night of silence" (157) lighted by what Maurice Blanchot calls "a neutral, directionless gleam that does not go out, yet that does not shed light—the gaze turned back upon itself and closed in a circle."[53] Indeed, this twilight or non-positional, neutral light dooms its subject to turning circles in the solitary, monological, cavern of aesthetic experience. Yet, when voiceless, positionless, and unreserved fascination would reign, in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* these destructive visions break off:

> Ces visions n'étaient qu'une erreur de l'oubli
> Leur charme sèchement rompu nous enseigne que
> Revendiquer son bien n'est pas l'avoir.
> Fini donc, fini ce leurre entretenu. (13)
>
> [These visions were just a lapse of forgetting,
> Their charm brusquely broken teaches us that
> Demanding one's own is not the same as having it.
> Enough then, with these sustained lures.]

The charm of the visions of the child and the promise of the flame's unreserved, hence, neutral glow, are shattered. Confronted with the failure to destroy the figure's reserve, the poet attempts to make of this failure a lesson well-learned. By disrupting the charm of these visions, the poem proposes to teach us to see through both the delusion and its project: to create a space of communion in which to play out one's mythological and immediate union with the child.

The spell that is broken in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* is the one under which we could say "She is there and truly there" (13). What is taught is that not only is she not where we thought to see her, but she is also not in the realm of the dead: "Elle n'est pas où nous croyons la voir / Ni là où nous ne serons pas davantage" [She is not where we think we see her / Nor there where we also will not be] (13). Des Forêts thus suggests that we are now so far removed from the delusion of the figure's eternal presence that we again find ourselves in the sober realm of reason, chastising the fool who would believe in communion through death:

> Muets tout au fond de la terre
> Qui, sauf à se donner le change,
> Pourrait désormais nous entendre
> Comme au temps des amours heureuses
> Où nous étions de vivantes personnes. (13)
>
> [Silenced, deep underground
> Who, except for dupes of their own lies,
> Could now hear us
> As in the days of happy loves
> When we were living persons.]

The possibility of the community of the "we" also persists in this reserve, but displaced and interred in the realm of the dead, and only the "dupes of their own lies" can pretend to hear this reserved voice. Yet, had not des Forêts also suggested in "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce," that only the act of "se donner le change" could give rise to a fiction that can speak "le langage de la vérité" [the language of truth] (289)? The reflexive "se donner le change" conflates the expressions "donner le change," to fool or to throw off the track, and "prendre le change," to be fooled or to be thrown off the track. It merges subject and object into an agent that is both giver and taker of the "change": both deceiver and deceived. Thus, the subject who would hear the mute voice of communion in death must give the lie to itself.[54] The community proposed in the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* is founded upon failure made law, a law duly noted—"Prenons-en acte" [Let us hereby record it](14)—as an irreparable break through which the "we" might refuse a possible union to the figure with whom "Nous rêvions d'aller nous perdre ensemble / . . . / Ne faire qu'un avec elle dans la mort / Choisie comme la forme parfaite du silence" [We used to dream of losing ourselves together / . . . / of being at one with her in death / Chosen as the

perfect form of silence] (14). The *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* seemingly reject the belief in communion with the dead. Yet, in reply to the statement: "Irreparable break. Let us hereby record it," these poems also offer up another voice that says:

> Nous voilà désolés la vie durant,
> Notre mémoire ouverte comme une blessure,
> C'est en elle que nous la verrons encore
> Mais captive de son image, mais recluse
> Dans cette obscurité dévorante. (14)
>
> [Now we are disappointed for a lifetime,
> Our memory like an open wound,
> In which we shall see her again
> But as the captive of her image, sequestered
> In this consuming obscurity.]

By imperatively announcing the end of mourning ("Prenons-en acte"), one simultaneously refuses to be duped ("[de] se donner le change") and to believe in the promise of communion in a candid light. In so doing, however, the repressed feminine figure reappears in the resolute breach or wound instated between this supposedly disabused self and herself.

The *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* thus offer a positive answer to des Forêts's earlier writings, and to the Stranger's hypothesis (in *Les Mendiants*) that all belief in myth has gone from the world. In Rimbaldian fashion, the Stranger dismissed his belief in myth and in the beauty of this feminine figure: "As for beauty . . . it has no place in my hell, and in the event that it might succeed in forcing its way in, I would immediately disable it from exercising its evil power" (191). The narrator of *Le Bavard* equally rejected such verbal alchemy and the timeless twilight of illusion and myth. He professed his loyalty to the logic of the noonday sun, and to the world "that we qualify as real and [that is the only one] worthy of our condition, since I have always preferred the rigidness of the noonday sun to evening vapors" (131–32).

Though the *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* appear to reject immediate communion with the dead, they also promise such immediacy, free from the foolish act of duping oneself. Yet, the reason for recalling past events or "Everything that was" is because "what was" offers a better understanding or "a better vision of time"

(16). Rather than being representable, these events take the form of "figures réfractaires / Qu'en dépit de plus d'un détour / La langue échoue à prendre dans ses pièges" [refractory figures / Which despite its countless detours / Language fails to ensnare](16). Yet these refractory figures also help the mind to understand events more clearly:

> Elles rayonnent assez fort pour que s'exerce
> Au-delà des mots leur hégémonie souveraine
> Sur l'esprit qui, grâce à elles, y voit plus clair
> Quand il ne se laisse pas dévoyer par la phrase
> Avec ses trop beaux accords, son rituel trompeur
> Auxquels s'oppose en tout la communion silencieuse,
> Ce feu profond sans médiation impure. (16–17)[55]
>
> [They shine so intensely that
> Beyond words their sovereign hegemony holds sway
> Over the mind which, thanks to them, sees better
> When it doesn't get distracted by the sentence's
> Overly beautiful harmonies, its deceptive ritual
> Utterly the opposite of silent communion
> This deep ardor free from impure mediations.]

It is only by passing through language's mediating power and its "deceptive ritual" that the poet can evoke the possibility of a silent communion free from "impure mediations." *Ostinato*, on the other hand, rejects this silent communion devoid of "impure mediations," and the subject's true knowledge of itself is accessible only by giving the lie to itself, by means of "lying through omission" [mensonge par omission], and by being distracted by language's beautiful harmonies. It discredits the sober rejection of illusion, and proposes that the only way out of the endless oscillation between dream and sober rejection of the dream occurs "by giving language its due" [en faisant crédit au langage] (71), and in language's power to throw the subject off of its own track ("se donner le change"):

> *se donner le change*—mensonge par omission sans lequel il basculerait à nouveau dans le silence d'autant plus inacceptable que, singeant le détachement, il ne conduit qu'à une autre forme d'imposture aggravée par le fait que c'est en un sens refuser de l'assumer. (71)

[*to throw oneself off one's own track*—lie by omission without which he would again fall back into a silence that is all the more unacceptable since, in mimicking detachment, it only leads to a form of imposture that is all the more serious since it is, in a way, a refusal to admit to being an impostor.]

To lie by omission allows one to escape voiceless obsession and the endless circle of monologue. Rather than the sober rejection of language's "voies et détours," both narrator and reader must come under the spell of the Bavard's "perfume of disaster"(67) emanating from the narrative conflation of *mythos* and *logos*.

In "Une voix venue d'ailleurs", Maurice Blanchot asked the following of Louis-René des Forêts's *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* and *Ostinato*: "Where is the beginning? Is it something or someone who begins?" (29). Perhaps recalling Yves Bonnefoy's preface to *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, it is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that best answers these questions, and Blanchot (quoting Hegel) suggests that the life of the Spirit begins with death: "The Spirit lives in so far as it is dead to the instance that it itself *was*" (29). As in his reading of Bonnefoy, however, Hegel's death is too singular, too spectacular, and not disastrous enough. Thus he adds: "*I* can speak, *then*, only in the third person. This is how Hegel gets around to *we* ('we,' which is to say me then and me now). In this way nothing is lost. Death is always a beautiful death, since it is *retained* in the *we* that is made up of me then and me now."[56] Just as Georges Bataille had suggested that a certain poetry was too pretty, so too, for des Forêts and Blanchot, is Hegelian death too beautiful, too convenient, and too tidy.

Ostinato acknowledges that writing is the passage from the first to the third person, and that narrative moves "sans cesse de là-bas à ici où le *je* n'est plus qu'un *il* douloureusement proche, douloureusement étranger" [ceaselessly from over there to here where the *I* is no more than a *he* painfully close, painfully unfamiliar] (30). The power of words is such that, out of nothing and from nowhere, they can create a subject that seems more alive than any subject that dutifully embraces the form proscribed by memory's objective recall of factual events: "tantôt surgi d'ailleurs ou de nulle part, tantôt né sur place et comme déchargé par les mots de tout le poids de la mémoire qui subordonne la vérité

d'une vie à la vérité des faits" [that at times arise from elsewhere or from nowhere, at others born on the spot and as though unburdened by words of all the weight of memory, which subordinates life's truth to the truth of facts] (31). Des Forêts's writings oscillate between the first and third persons, between the imaginary poles of absolute responsibility and absolute irresponsibility. They thus also stay in contact with what Blanchot calls "the absolute milieu where the thing again becomes image, where the image, instead of alluding to a figure, becomes an allusion to what is without figure, and instead of a form drawn on absence, becomes the formless presence of this absence."[57] Yet, rather than presuming to present this absence, des Forêts combines the troubling insubordination of present absence with "the truth of facts" [la vérité des faits]. In *Face à l'immémorable*, for instance:

Subordonner la recherche du passé à une reconstitution scrupuleuse serait en méconnaître l'enjeu, ces forces potentielles qu'un coup de dés malchanceux ne suffit pas à ruiner. L'imagination venue ultérieurement combler la perte, ne la dévoile que mieux, d'où, si telle est la fin recherchée, l'opportunité parfois d'y recourir, l'habituelle distinction entre le faux et l'authentique étant comme effacée, preuve qu'ils s'annulent ou coexistent harmonieusement. (20–21)

[To subordinate the search for the past to a scrupulous reconstruction would be to misunderstand what is at stake, the potential forces that an unlucky throw of the dice cannot ruin. Imagination that comes after the fact to fill a loss, reveals this loss all the more, which implies, if this is the desired goal, the opportunity to have recourse to the imagination, since the usual distinction between the false and the authentic is as though erased, proof that they annul one another or coexist harmoniously.]

Imagination "livens up" a hazy past not so much by obliterating the distinction between present and past, as by revealing the chasm left by the fact that this past is now absent. It annuls the principle of identity governing the authentic and the false, not for the sake of erasing all historical events, but in order to maintain the forces of chance—"le hasard"—which no throw of the dice can eradicate.

Neither the present third person nor the past first person is the

voice of this narrative that resides between *logos* and *mythos*. As des Forêts writes in *Ostinato*:

> La troisième personne pour s'affirmer contre le défaut de la première. Il est ce que je fus, non ce que je suis qui n'a pas de présence réelle. A moins d'y voir l'unique et dernier recours pour se décharger de sa propre personne.
>
> Non, ce n'est ni lui ni moi, c'est le monde qui parle. C'est sa terrible beauté. (66)

> [The third person to affirm oneself against the lack of the first. He is what I was, not what I am, which has no real presence. Unless one could consider this the unique and last recourse to unburden oneself of one's own person.
>
> No, it is neither he nor I, it is the world that speaks. It is its terrible beauty.]

Within imagination's secret necessity, des Forêts suggests that another voice is at times heard: the world's terrible beauty speaks. Yet, being freed from the truth imperative of the first person singular does not imply the freedom to reflect upon oneself as a fictional third person other: "Qui sait si l'emploi de la forme verbale du présent comme la désignation à la troisième personne ne relèvent pas tout bonnement de la lâcheté: rompre avec le temps présent, s'abriter derrière l'ambiguïté protectrice de la fiction? Et cependant une voix s'élève aussitôt qui, sans trouver d'arguments décisifs à lui opposer, s'insurge avec véhémence contre les grossières simplifications de la psychologie" [Who knows if the use of the verbal form of the present just as the use of the third person are not merely due to cowardice: to break with the present, to hide behind the protective ambiguity of fiction? Yet a voice rises at once; without finding any decisive arguments, it rises up vehemently against the crude simplifications of psychology] (137). The author's decision to write in the present tense third person singular is not the product of psychological cowardice. Rather, the appearance of the third person in writing occurs for infinitely more complicated reasons. The act of the writing-self is not psychologically determined because evoking the imaginary cannot be premeditatively evoked. Rather, the imaginary emanates from the images' own inner linguistic necessity: "L'esprit appelle à lui les images où il croit se reconnaître et, pourvu

que ce soit sans préméditation mais dans le sens et selon des voies qui correspondent à leur secrète nécessité elles vivent alors de toute la force qu'il met à les rendre aussi présentes que les réalités les plus aiguës du moment" [The mind calls forth images where it believes it recognizes itself and, as long as it is without premeditation but in the direction and in accordance with the channels that correspond to their secret necessity, these images are alive with all the force that the mind puts into making them as present as the sharpest realities of the moment] (138). These images are not only as present as the most present moment of reality, but exceed the latter, since only the event of imagination grants the place in which the "real moment" that has come to pass ("ce qui est advenu") can take place ("trouve à se produire").[58] This presence of the image, des Forêts suggests, is made further possible by the fact that

> pour une large part ce qui est advenu autrefois ne trouve à se produire que sous la pleine lumière d'aujourd'hui. Rien ici qui réponde à une attitude calculée, rien qui n'obéisse au mouvement naturel et impérieux du ainsi-en-est-il parce qu'il ne saurait être autrement.
>
> Encore faudrait-il pour s'en prévaloir que la nécessité porte en elle sa justification. (138)[59]

> [in large part what has come to pass in other times can take place only in the full light of the present day. Nothing here answers to a calculated attitude, nothing obeys to the natural, imperious movement that suggests that it must-be-so because it could not be otherwise.
>
> Still, to take advantage of it, this necessity would have to include its own justification.]

The space in which the past event can take place cannot be marshaled by the mind, and what does appear is not the recognizable self that it *was*, but an unrecognizable self whose presumed past only appears in the event of the image. The mind cannot say: "I was this that my image shows me to be," but rather: "he is what I was." The imaging self is this strangely present *he* who is what *I was*, not who *I am*. Nor is this imaging self the Hegelian communal "we" merging the third and first persons of past and present. In fact, the final sentence from the preceding passage challenges its laudatory tone. Des Forêts thus reconsiders the force of imagi-

nation to suggest that an event that has "come to pass" can only "take place" in the image as event. Yet, such an imaginary event remains necessarily hidden from the mind, for which the presence of this imaginary event is neither communicable, conceptualizable, nor justifiable. The necessity of these images must simply be taken for granted. They are called forth by the mind with the assumption that only they allow the mind to recognize or reflect itself. When left on the path of their own secret necessity, the "voies et détours de la fiction," the products of the imagination, are as alive as any event, present or past. They make up a poetic narrative that operates on the assumption that "*it is so . . . even if it was otherwise*," and through this narrative an insignificant voice eternally returns to face us with *l'advenir de l'immémorable*.

3

Jacques Dupin: Between Graffiti and Paraphs

A poet must leave traces of his passing, not proof. Only traces lead to dreams.

—René Char

In 1950, in his preface to Jacques Dupin's collection of poems entitled *Cendrier du voyage*, René Char wrote that, following World War II, the imprint ("griffe") of a new seafaring bird, hero, or poet could only be sought in vain. For Char, the absence of a figure who would glorify man's failures, and succeed in hovering, unmediated, above the alternatingly serene and tempestuous course of history should have surprised no one: "Que sur cette plage aux rocs chancelants, attachante et spécieuse, où viennent s'inscrire en mots de victoire les échecs successifs de l'homme finalement innocenté par la poésie, nous ayions depuis quelques années cherché en vain la griffe d'un nouvel oiseau voilier, son absence n'aura étonné personne." [That on this captivating and specious beach, with wavering rocks, where the successive failures of man, finally absolved by poetry, are inscribed with the words of victory, we have sought in vain for several years now the imprint of a new seafaring bird, its absence has surprised no one].[1] Rather than a "griffe" or claw, what remained of hope following World War II were but a few lines traced in the sand: "La vague trop sereine et le vent des tempêtes, alternant sans cesse, ne lui auraient pas permis de se poser. Quelques barres sur le sable attestaient seules que l'espoir s'efforçait encore" [The alternating tempestuous winds and all-too-serene waves have not allowed him to land. Just a few lines in the sand attest that hope still endeavored] (9).

Some twenty years following René Char's reading of *Cendrier du voyage*, Jean-Pierre Richard's preface to Jacques Dupin's *"L'Embrasure" précédé de "Gravir"* (1971) suggested that the violence inherent in Dupin's poetry is both redemptive and, in his words, "clearly ontological" ["bien évidemment ontologique"]: "The integrity of a poetically sayable and sharable world can be discovered only at the end or, rather, in the infinitely acute and always repeated moment of deterioration, and loss. . . . This poetry is also a serration [échancrure] that seeks to call and to reunite within itself the site for a future, and the dimension of a rediscovered human collective."[2] Richard's reading envisions a heroic figure that, for Char, had disappeared from our historical horizon. It proposes a hero, be it poetry itself, capable of triumphantly emerging from the trials of degradation and perdition, to reclaim art for the romantic destiny of a human collective. The possibility of reading such divergent accounts of Jacques Dupin's poetry underscores the need to understand the implications of the suggested absence of "un nouvel oiseau voilier," and to understand its persistent resurgence.

The first poem from Dupin's first collection of poems, *Cendrier du voyage* (1950), is tellingly entitled "Enfant du glas." It suggests that the voice of poetry originates in childhood or infancy and that it is therefore barely understandable: "l'enfance aux aguets derrière la vitre nulle pour apporter ses relents, ses bizarres traînées de lumière, le brisement de sa voix d'incomprise ou d'étrangère" [childhood on the lookout behind the hopeless window to bring its stenches, its bizarre streaks of light, the cracking of its misunderstood and unfamiliar voice] (11). René Char emphasized the importance of childhood in *Cendrier du voyage*, but he aptly refused to say that it signaled a form of confessional poetry. Rather, Dupin's early poems "were immediately granted an importance that we would have refused to simple childhood misfortunes" (9). They touch on an experience that is not simply the recollection of a singular childhood, an experience that parallels the narrative form of *Ostinato* described by Louis-René des Forêts as aimless, which is not to say "erring nor helpless, not even avid to return to the heart of childhood to reclaim from forgetfulness what had been lost or to rediscover from without its own figure and its own meaning" (35–36).

Nearly a quarter of a century following René Char's preface, Dupin returned the favor with his introduction to *Le Monde de l'art n'est pas le monde du pardon* (1974), in which he echoed Char's reading of *Cendrier du voyage* by suggesting that Char's poetry is not the product of a unique autobiographical subject. Rather, the poet's autobiographical disappearance or erasure is at stake: "The work's truth requires the poet's effacement or his being distanced from it. The contradictory traits of his living features, his generosity, his anxious vigilance, exist only just beneath the surface in the act of writing."[3] Similarly, Dupin's poetry depends not so much on some inner poetic self as upon what Stéphane Mallarmé, in "Crise de vers" (1896), named the poet's "disparition élocutoire" [elocutional disappearance].[4] Through the poem's elocution, the poetic self simultaneously comes into being and is estranged from the biographical subject. As such, Dupin's poetry also expresses "a life that, in being written, is also retraced and, in its relation to [poetic] form rearranges subjectivity's eccentric site."[5] For Dupin, again regarding Char, the poet's estrangement from his work implies that every attempt "to press the poet with questions can only lead to odious simulacra and to the vain paraphrase of the poem from which he originates, from which he is excluded, and of which he is the stranger par excellence." The poem engenders the poetic subject as the stranger *par excellence*, ecstatically projected or called ahead of a communal "we": "appelé en avant de *nous*."[6]

The poetic self's utopianism explores not only the topology of a given community but also what lies outside or ahead of it, as Paul Celan suggested in "Le Méridien" (1960): "Topological explorations? / Certainly! But in the clarity of what still remains to be explored: in the clarity of utopia. / And man? / And the creature? / In such clarity" (17). The poet's effacement or "disparition élocutoire" presupposes a utopia that rests neither on nor in a given ideological topos, but that seeks to perpetuate the unceasing negativity of poetry. This effacement or erasure incorporates what Dupin calls a presence that lies "below the surface of unfurled writing" [en filigrane dans l'écriture déployée], and that is irreducible to textual production and recollection. Yet, what lies just beneath the surface of writing might also rise just above it, or be, as Dupin wrote in the 1968 prose poems "Moraines," in *L'Embrasure*, "ce qui, du futur sans visage, déborde le texte et dénude sa foisonnante et meurtrière illisibilité" [what, from the

faceless future, overflows the text and strips bare its abundant and murderous illegibility] (159). If one can speak of autobiographical form when considering Dupin's poetry, then it is a form that combines memory with textual production in such a way that in retracing or re-presenting itself, the poetic self also traces and presents itself. As in the writings of Louis-René des Forêts, the remembrance of what is traced is also forgotten or erased, to be pursued elsewhere. In *Une Apparence de soupirail* (1982) we read: "Mériter que chaque mot s'efface à l'instant de son émission. Qu'il jaillisse et s'évapore. Dans l'élargissement de son arôme et de sa trace, le dérèglement de son accord" [To merit that each word disappear in the moment it is pronounced. That it emerge and evaporate. In the widening of its aroma and its trace, the disturbance of its accord].[7] Rather than ascribing a fixed meaning to their object, the words of the poem share in the erasure of meaning.

In the 1969 poem "Tremblement," from *L'Embrasure*, the "unassimilated material" or trace presence becomes a "pile of destroyed words":

Des colonnes d'odeurs sauvages
Me hissent jusqu'à toi,
Langue rocheuse révélée
Sous la transparence d'un lac de cratère.

Fronde rivale, liens errants
Une vie antérieure
Impatiente comme la houle,
Se presse et grandit contre moi

Et, goutte à goutte, injecte son venin
Aux feuillets d'un livre qui s'assombrit
Pour être mieux lu par la flamme.

De ce ramas de mots détruits
Entre les ais de la mort imprenable
Naîtra la plante vulnéraire
Et le vent noueux au-delà. (94)

[Columns of wild scents
Haul me to you,
Rocky tongue revealed
Beneath the transparency of a crater lake.

Rival insurrections, wandering ties
An anterior life
Impatient like the swell,
Presses and grows against me

And, drop by drop, injects its venom
To the layers of a book that grows darker
Better to be read by the flame.

From this pile of destroyed words
Between the planks of impregnable death
The vulnerary plant will be born.
And the knotted wind beyond.]

"Tremblement" announces the search for a lacustrine "langue rocheuse" toward which the poetic subject must be hoisted or hauled. Its trembling announces the event of the self's chance encounter with an unknown "anterior life" that injects its venom into the leaves of a progressively more somber, more brittle book. The anterior life is also "this pile of destroyed words" from which "the vulnerary plant will be born." The title of the poem "Tremblement," along with the expressions "destroyed words" and "rocky tongue" suggest that the event of the poem is a trembling search for something or some tongue, as difficult as memory traces embedded in flesh. The trembling arises from the event of the poem, and is akin to Charles Baudelaire's reaction, in 1861, to the opening of Wagner's *Tannhaüser*: "With the first measures, the nerves live in unison with the melody; any flesh that remembers begins to tremble" (795). It does not imply an "anterior life," but promises a future "vulnerary plant." The trembling Baudelaire alluded to and to which Dupin's poem refers also evokes another form of poetic narrative, one Maurice Blanchot formulates succinctly, regarding the autobiographical narrative form in Stendahl's *Life of Henri Brulard*. For Blanchot the other narrative or form of history at stake in a trembling and errant anterior life is also a form of "history that finds its self, not as already made and solidified history, but as existence turned toward the future and which, at the moment of its recounting, seems always in the making and unknown to the very person who narrates in the past tense."[8] "Tremblement" expresses this instance of an anterior life that "presses and grows

against me" [se presse et grandit contre moi], as the originary instance of a self that is not simply recounted or recountable. As in his remarks on the "beginning" of Louis-René des Forêts's *Poèmes de Samuel Wood*, Blanchot suggests that poetry is "history, it is an event, the event of history itself, and this is because its most steadfast claim is to give the word 'beginning' all its force."[9] As the event of history, poems such as "Tremblement" and "L'Etang dans la forêt" (also from *L'Embrasure*) transgress representational models of historical discourse. In "L'Etang dans la forêt," for instance, infancy intimates an anterior life whose voice is forced, by the poet, not in order to drag its history into the light of day, but to return this voice to its murky past, and into an uncertain site ("un des foyers de l'ellipse"):

> Rien de sûr, ici, tout contre moi,
> un des foyers de l'ellipse, ne se trace,
> parmi la limaille des mots, sans se décorporer
> son double. Et le détruire . . . Elle,
> avec la même fièvre minutieuse,
> sa turbulence obscurcissant
> le second foyer de l'évocation,
> s'effondre comme un chant d'oiseau.
>
> Paroles, alluvions régressives,
> d'un avenir épars jetant un tablier de brume
> sur cette enfance déjà noire (95–96)
>
> [Nothing certain here, everything against me,
> one of the foci of the ellipse, cannot be traced,
> among the filings of words, without disembodying
> its double. And destroying it . . . She,
> with the same meticulous fever,
> its turbulence obscuring
> the second foyer of the evocation,
> collapses like a bird's song.
>
> Words, regressive alluvium,
> of a scattered future throwing a shutter of mist
> over this already dark childhood]

As with the anterior life growing "contre moi" in "Tremblement," in "L'Etang dans la forêt" the narrative of infancy is undetermined, uncertain, and pits "everything against" the poetic self—"against," in the dual sense of apposed and opposed. The event of the poem or the forcing of the voice of infancy, its presence here ("ici"), as one of the "foci of the ellipse" through "the filings of words," both provokes and destroys the site or event that it founds. What remains of this voice, event, or site is a trace that escapes the dialectic of apposition and opposition. The trace creates a space in which the same and the other merge, in the same manner as the subject-predicate structure of the phrase "se décorporer / son double" collapses, since the verse break after the reflexive infinitive merges what is traced into its double to mean *that* which is traced. When the poem is on the verge of signifying a given space, it collapses into other possible spaces, for it is but "one of" [*un des*] the "foci of the ellipse." What the poem evokes is little more than an ambivalent vocal trace that is equally obscured by the ellipsis preceding the word "Elle." Yet, from the poem's turbulence, from its traces, and from its words as the *disjecta* of filings and alluvium, there arises a "scattered future" [un avenir épars]. In another poem entitled "L'Ordre du jour," from *Gravir* (1963), the possibility of this "avenir épars" belongs to the self's aimless projection into an undetermined future:

> du fond de ce malheur, je suis la foule, l'énorme vigueur aveugle et la plus courte flamme. Je suis ce point morne et suffocante de réflexion, la projection instantanée d'une errance future et d'un mensonge mort.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> De ce mal qui s'étire dans la longue saignée des siècles, je suis l'exacte et pure abstraction,
> —le noeud d'asphyxie formelle.
>
> Ignorez moi passionnément! (28)
>
> [from the depths of this calamity, I am the crowd, the enormous blind vigor, and the shortest flame. I am this mournful and suffocating point of reflection, the instantaneous projection of a future errancy and a dead lie.
> I am the exact and pure abstraction of the evil that stretches through the long bloody centuries,
> —the knot of formal asphyxiation.
> Ignore me passionately!]

Here the poem becomes a form of "eroded writing" positioned in an asphyxiating reality from which and within which it attempts to destroy the misery of the human dwelling. As such, "L'Ordre du jour" belies a conception of poetry as flight before what Jean-Pierre Richard calls "the sadistic onslaught of History."[10] For Richard, the following verses from *Gravir*: "Ta nuque plus bas que pierre, / Ton corps plus nu / Que cette table de granit" [Your head lower than stone, / Your body more naked / than this granite table] (72), do indeed represent poetry and the poet's flight before history: "Existence chokes itself off, submerges itself, buries itself [s'enterre] or rather grounds itself [se terre]. For if I convert myself in this way to the subterranean it is still to take refuge there, to flee the double exterior catastrophe of space: the collapse of things and the sadistic assault of History."[11] Richard relies on typography to indicate an ontological model ("l'*H*istoire"), whereby the goal of the subject's "Dasein" or being-there is to intersect with what Heidegger calls "authentic historicality."[12] Yet, such an ontologization of "History" transposes "history" into what Adorno has called history's "*existentiale*" whereby "historicality immobilizes history in the unhistorical realm, heedless of the historical conditions that govern the inner composition and constellation of subject and object."[13] Thus, in Richard's reading, the subject's intersection or authentic historical articulation occurs in such a way that the subject's historical temporal projection ("Entwurf") is repressed, rather than annihilated. Thus, it is more in Richard's interpretation of history than in Dupin's poetry that history appears as a sadistic fate and force to be fled.

In another poem from *Gravir*, entitled "Le Chemin frugal" (1963), an open future is preserved by a self who refuses to envision the endpoint toward which he is moving:

> Chaque pas visible
> Est un monde perdu,
> Un arbre brulé.
> Chaque pas aveugle
> Reconstruit la ville,
> A travers nos larmes,
> Dans l'air déchiré. (24)
>
> [Each visible step
> Is a lost world,
> A burned tree.
> Each blind step
> Rebuilds the city,
> Through our tears,
> In the torn air.]

To proceed or to step forth blindly breeds the invisible turmoil of disorder that is beneficial to rebuilding the city, whereas the visible or "given" step reveals only a world that is lost. Yet, this invisible step is not merely the positive, absolute revelation of a still unknown "spark," since the poem "donne la force d'entrer dans ta ville et l'orgueil de n'y point régner" [gives the strength to enter your city and the pride not to reign] (29).[14] The step remains negative, promising the possibility of perpetual alteration, as in the poem "La Soif," from *Gravir*, which begins with a plea for a catastrophic landslide ("l'éboulement"), and for a Mallarmean dismembering of the book ("la dislocation du livre"):

> Je marche interminablement.
>
> Je marche pour altérer quelque chose de pur,
> Cet oiseau aveugle à mon poing
> Ou ce trop clair visage entrevu
> A distance d'un jet de pierres.
>
> J'écris pour enfouir mon or,
> Pour fermer tes yeux. (47)
>
> [I walk interminably.
>
> I walk to alter something pure,
> This blind bird on my fist
> Or this all too clear face glimpsed
> A stone's throw away.
>
> I write to bury my gold,
> To close your eyes.]

The poet's ceaseless march seeks not so much to alter what Dupin's *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche* (1962) calls an absolute or ontological notion of time, as to alter an ontical temporal horizon to alter a face that has become all too well known,

or to alter the purity of "acquired habits."[15] In the same text, Dupin suggested that "we walk in the street with our eyes closed. We only see through the deforming prism of acquired habits and of a blinding knowledge: we see these passersby as we *know* they are" (59). The poet writes not only to make his own world a bit more obscure, but ours as well: "To close *your* eyes." Dupin's poetry also contradicts a purely ontological reading of the march evoked in the poem "La Soif" by indicating that the artist's objective is as much political and historical as it is ontological. Again in *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin noted: "Solitude closes in on man, but his destiny is to struggle without cease, without hope, to open a breach in the wall of his prison" (11).[16]

In the poem entitled "Le Prisonnier," equally from *Gravir*, the ceaseless, hopeless struggle takes the form of an insurgent song:

> Terre mal étreinte, terre aride,
> Je partage avec toi l'eau glacée de la jarre,
> L'air de la grille et le grabat.
> Seul le chant insurgé
> S'alourdit encore de tes gerbes,
> Le chant qui est à soi-même sa faux. (48)
>
> [Poorly clasped earth, arid earth,
> I share with you the icy water of the jar,
> The air of the bars and the pallet.
> Only the insurgent song
> Is still weighed down with your sheaves,
> The song that is its own scythe.]

As with Arthur Rimbaud's "réalité rugueuse," poems such as "Le Prisonnier" push their song to their own limit ("Le chant qui est à soi-même sa faux") for the sake of creating the space in which "we" live. In the final, italicized, text of *Gravir*, this insurgent song becomes an "Arachnéenne sollicitation qui menez de ténèbre en ténèbre ma faux jusqu'à l'orée du cri" [Gossamer enticement that leads my scythe from darkness to darkness to the scream's edge] (83). This spider-like, gossamer enticement is also related to Francis Ponge's poem *L'Araignée* (1952), which Dupin reviewed for the *Cahiers d'art* in the following year. The poet draws his work from himself, as does the spider: "[il] tire de soi

son oeuvre" [(he) draws his work from himself],[17] a spider able and willing to abandon or destroy its own web, to work for the sake of "the future work [l'œuvre future] and of present communication with the reader; communication that is possible only on the condition of this destruction," to which he added that "the ability to bring about this communion tends to perpetuate itself in a death that is open to all possibilities."[18] Like Ponge, Dupin seeks to preserve the possibility of communication while disqualifying any one dominant form of communication. The breach in presence is also an emptiness secreted, as a spider would its web, as a network of fragile lines surrounding and surrounded by empty spaces preserving and annulling human inter-subjective relations. In *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin suggested that the secretion of emptiness was also the operative force behind Giacometti's artistic activity: "From the beginning the painful feeling of solitude, a desire to communicate with other people, with the world, and the anguish before the realization of the impossibility of this communication" (9). It might seem that poetry's ability to evoke and to reach this other can only fail. It also might seem that it is impossible to reach this other since "we speak without hearing one another" (9). Yet Dupin added: "Or *almost*. But this 'almost' is not enough, it only serves to enrage an exigent being. An abyss separates us, a void that we ourselves secrete, a distance that is made more painful through our every effort to diminish it" (9). This emptiness "that we ourselves secrete" is equally reminiscent of the solitude Louis-René des Forêts sensed at the heart of his first novel, *Les Mendiants*. Enraging as it might be, this emptiness or distance nevertheless maintains the possibility of a "divided man," perpetually at risk before the linguistic and historical forces of articulation, as well as before an ideology of the dis-articulated.[19] As Dupin wrote in the "prière d'insérer" to *Gravir*: "The communication established between one and the other, even if the latter is joined by others, is only exchange by default, through excess, and an essential misunderstanding. The poem does not pursue any other goal than its incandescent sharing, but in the absence of the poet. Thus, what engages the poet in his becoming and his experience, what binds him, what he cannot name, finally chases him away from the place of his torment, explodes his name, and speaks with his voice."[20] The essential misunderstanding inherent in commu-

nication is central to Dupin's poetry, to his sense of the postwar cultural and historical desert, and to the works of his fellow poets of *L'Ephémère*.

In 1957, and with reference to World War II, one of the original editors of *L'Ephémère*, Gaëtan Picon, suggested that poetry had to reckon with "a history so monstrous that it denies any possibility of poetry."[21] Picon's proposal that historical monstrosities proscribe the possibility of poetry echoed Paul Celan's description, in "Le Méridien," of the poem's inclination toward silence (14–15), which Dupin also had addressed in an early essay entitled "Comment dire?" (1949). Following World War II, for Dupin, "the best thing to do was to remain silent."[22] Yet, the poetic possibility denied by Picon's dictum does not refer to a paraphic poetry—to the poetry René Char had compared to a "few lines in the sand" (9)—but to a poetry of the "griffe" or claw that attempts to persist as the humanizing song of a perhaps all too inhuman society. What had become absurd was for poetry to humanly sing the inhuman or, as Maurice Blanchot suggested in "L'Athéisme et l'écriture, l'humanisme et le cri" (1967), to pretend to nobly express and to nobly consider "the human in man is to rapidly engage in an untenable discourse which—how could we deny it?—is more repugnant than all the crude expressions of nihilism."[23] In terms of Jacques Dupin's poetry, the monstrous history of World War II repudiates teleological and humanist testimonial. Yet World War II does not stand as the singular event from which monstrosity originated nor as of which narrative form comes into contradiction with the events it takes as its subject matter. Blanchot suggests, for instance, that such a self-contradicting testimonial pervades the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, whose purpose Chateaubriand summed up in 1838: "Of myself, I will only say what is suitable to my human dignity, and, I daresay, to the loftiness of my heart. Man must be shown only what is beautiful."[24] Blanchot's response to Chateaubriand's understanding of literature's testimonial imperative is to suggest that "it is not death that speaks in these *Mémoires*, but existence as dead, as always having been a thing of the past, immobilized in a life that remains, in its grandiose manner, alien to any future and even to the future of death."[25] Dupin's poetry pointedly questions such didactic exposition of humanity's historical dignity and the insertion of grandiose themes into art. Rather than testimonial

or flight before historical events, his poetry is imbued with history as a living force, and as what Edouard Glissant called "this monster to whom we can no longer refuse to pay tribute."[26] As with Yves Bonnefoy's attempt to have poetry be "la mort en acte," Dupin's poetry seeks to maintain the possibility of a community based on "a death that is open to all possibilities," even if this means searching for the impossible form of poetry's inhuman voice.

Dupin evoked a poetry of the inhuman in his monograph entitled *Miró* (1993), where he considers that the Catalan artist's so-called "savage paintings" (1934–1938) express the ubiquity of monstrosity during the years of the Spanish Civil War and the years preceding World War II: "the monstrous was everywhere; it occupied his whole field of vision. It was a prophetic warning of universal cataclysm."[27] Dupin also suggested that Miró's artistic rendering of the monstrous was an attempt to overcome monstrosity, and that his paintings announce "a sort of exorcism of the monster on the artist's part. While he was perhaps not capable of averting the danger, at least he could face it head on, with strength and lucidity born of despair. The marvelous becomes fantastic terror, the dream a clairvoyant nightmare, lyricism a barbaric hymn" (188). Lyricism becomes a "barabaric hymn," but not by fleeing from reality into the "sur-real." Rather than surreal figments of the imagination, for Dupin, Miró's monsters are inescapably real: "Miró did not invent his monsters . . . he was simply painting reality, his old familiar reality" (187–90). Miró was thus one of but a few visionary artists "first subjected to the venom of the world's black plague, and who, again as visionaries, predicted the stifling years, and the era of the assassins. He was one of the rare few who, in the same spasm, vomited both the monsters and their exorcism" (185). Dupin's poetry will also seek to secrete or excrete the monstrous and its exorcism. With specific reference to the Spanish Civil War Dupin pointed out that the woman's leg in Miró's aquarelle *Woman in Revolt* (1938), "had to rise to run, but also to rise up against monstrous tyranny. Flight and rebellion become indistinguishable, and the leg does rise, grow in importance, and become a monster confronting the monstrous, blithely transgressing the figural scale and conquering an unimaginable autonomy" (220). Thus, the artist's silence, his "mutisme," does not occur when confronted

with immediate presence of Being, but in the face of ontically and historically monstrous events that cannot be discursively "named." It arises when faced with a monstrosity that can be neither confronted nor fled. Dupin is thus clear regarding art's dependence on, but also its reaction to, its historical context. Faced with historical monstrosities, the artist's monstrosity or inhumanity is his expression of resistance through art's nonfigural and nondiscursive autonomy—resistance through indirection. In a wartime letter (1941) to Francis Curel, René Char also expressed the temptation to remain silent, and to not publish the poems he had written during the war until something happened "to completely overturn the *unnamable situation* in which we find ourselves."[28] Rather than the product of an irrevocably lost past, the poet's temptation to remain silent is partially the consequence of a monstrous historical present threatening to plunge all into silence and into the absence of a future historical horizon.

Dupin's essay "Comment dire?" (1949), and much of his later poetry (beginning with "Enfant du glas") refer this muteness to the games of childhood against the backdrop of the mass destruction and death of World War II: "For having seen it [World War II] mix in with our childhood games, death, whether it menaces one being or an entire planet, can no longer move us or hold us back" (94). The poet's desire to remain silent arises when confronted with the historical coincidence of the ludic and the lethal. Yet, Dupin also recognized that something in language exceeds death's injunction to remain silent. As in his consideration of Francis Ponge's "L'Araignée," in "Comment dire?" Dupin pointed to the need for continued self-expression, which he compared to the need to waste ("gaspiller") an "excess of energy" [une énergie excédente] (93). He also insisted that the impulse to speak does exceed the historical temptation or edict to remain silent. Dupin's early essay thus expresses the need for a continued search for a way out of the silence imposed by "monstrous history." "Comment dire?" is also critical of the situation of poetry prior to World War II; a criticism that again appears in *Gravir*, in the poem entitled "La Parole" (1963):

> Ton voeu qui répugne à l'aisance d'une trame
> appauvrie,
> Balance entre deux morts.

> Les marges se resserent autour de ton lingot aride
> Et déjà, le dernier refuge, le feuillage, flambe,
>
> O ma parole en perte pure,
> Ma parole semblable à la rétraction d'une aile extrême
> sur la mer! (16)
>
> [Your vow that resists the ease of a weakened
> plot,
> Balances between two deaths.
>
> The margins draw in around your arid ingot
> And already, the last refuge, the foliage, is aflame
>
> O my useless words
> My words like the retraction of an extreme wing
> over the sea!]

The poem's "vow" hesitates between two deaths that Dupin already had described in "Comment dire?" as equally vain golden ages situated in the past and in the future: "The despair of our elders only expresses a disorderly oscillation between two equally vain golden ages. It is streaked with lightning and demonstrates an occasional gleam, but what about the anguish? Our despair is not theirs, knowing but itself, espousing only its own movement. It is ironic and tranquil, sure of itself, because conscious that it rests on the vivifying and true foundation of emptiness" (94). This first "despair" refers to what Dupin calls surrealism's "legendary prewar period," which he described as an era that "with hindsight, seems light, facile, and *superficial*" (93). Instead of this superficial and legendary past, Dupin proposed a means of expression supported only by "vivifying emptiness," and he rejected the nostalgic imagination of the interwar generation: "Our elders constantly train their imagination on this past, and only project the present on the screen of this seemingly euphoric past" (93). Dupin thus also criticized surrealism's inability to perceive postwar France in any other way than in the form of nostalgia for a mythological past. The "vow" in the poem "La Parole" thus balances between two deaths or words ("morts" or "mots"), and this view is not simply the projection of the present onto a legendary past, but also a "parole en perte pur," which resists ("répugne") the impoverished framework or plot of the first despair.

Though he rejected the "legendary" prewar years of surrealism, Dupin nevertheless did single out several artists who, along with René Char, were worthy of consideration by his own generation. In his essay "Peintures du désert" (1953), Dupin likened his poetry to the art of the erstwhile surrealist, Max Ernst. In many ways, this essay recalls Yves Bonnefoy's own doubts regarding surrealism's postwar legacy. For instance, Dupin asked: "during the interwar period, did surrealism translate, through its feverish drive, the growing pains of a generation or the final convulsion of a dying world?"[29] Both Dupin and Bonnefoy recognized that surrealism's greatest merit was that it "perpetually questioned artistic form" (49), and that this was reason enough to justify Max Ernst's continued loyalty to surrealism following the war. Yet Dupin also suggested that Ernst could not rest on his laurels, satisfied with repeating "the same old gesture in an open furrow" (49). Rather, Ernst developed what Dupin named "an adult surrealism, preserved from [surrealism's] petrifaction and infantile volubility" (49–50), thereby suggesting that postwar poetry and art might be akin to Ernst's Leirisian "age d'homme" of surrealism, where the "rêveur définitif" of André Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) is forced to question the "definitiveness" of his own presumably euphoric dream. Dupin's poetry, like that of the other poets of *L'Ephémère*, thus also reflects on the possibility of a poetic form that might be something like surrealism come of age.

The first prose poem from "Moraines" (1968), published in *L'Embrasure*, expresses the poet's own critical relationship to surrealism's endless dream: "Ecrire, est-ce un sommeil plus mobile et qui s'entoure de comparses? Ou le mouvement excessif d'une veille qui pulvérise ce qui la supporte, en nous jetant au centre immensément ouvert de sa pupille envenimée?" [Writing, is it a more mobile sleep that surrounds itself with supernumeraries? Or is it waking's excessive movement that pulverizes what supports it, throwing us into the immensely open center of its inflamed pupil?] (*Embrasure*, 131). "Moraines" questions a mobile, yet simulated sleep that is replete with simulacra. It also questions an excessive state of waking that absolutely pulverizes the underlying dream, and throws us into a contemplative eye that no longer shuts (to dream). As such, "Moraines" poses a question that is recurrent in the works of the poets of *L'Ephémère*: can one

really distinguish *logos* from *mythos*? "Moraines" already proposed what Dupin, fourteen years later in *Une Apparence de soupirail*, called "cette lame de sommeil profond qui se glisse dans chaque phrase éveillée. Epaisseur d'humus sur la face du soleil" [this blade of deep sleep that slips into each waking sentence. Layer of humus over the face of the sun] (78). Thus when in "Comment dire?" Dupin evoked the need to squander an excedent of energy, he was also defining an energy capable of inscribing the obscure and obscuring paraphs of poetry that can counteract a too literal, too direct form of writing or testimonial—"graph" or "griffe"—that had been struck dumb and blinded by historical forces.

The paraphic inscription as excedent transgresses each and every desire or requirement to remain silent. It is also what Dupin, in another prose poem from "Moraines," has named a "silent injunction" that "surfaces [affleure] in everyday words":

> C'est la réponse, l'acquiescement qui tonne le 'oui.' . . . Arbitraire déflagration, il jaillit de la gueule d'un quelconque canon dont le recul me jette à terre, ici, n'importe où, si je suis vivant. Ici un lieu habitable à cet instant à cause d'une imperceptible fracture, de l'infime intervalle qui mesure ma liberté de mouvement et de don. (133)
>
> [It is the answer, the acquiescing that roars the "yes." . . . Arbitrary explosion, it surges from the barrel of whatever cannon whose kick throws me to the ground, here, anywhere, as long as I am alive. Here a place that is livable in this instant because of an imperceptible fracture, the slight interval that measures my freedom of movement and of giving.]

Just as the nondiscursive paraph remains conjoined to the discursive, so does the silent injunction still communicate with everyday words ("mot quotidien"). The sudden explosive "yes" disrupts the self, throwing it not only outside of itself, but to the ground which, no matter where, comes to stand for this "here" ("Ici") that can also be "anywhere"; a "here" always free to change its position and ground. As such, the silent injunction also inserts an infinitesimally small fracture or interval in a history threatening to become absolute. Dupin's poetry is paraphic in the sense of a graffiti-like inscription of an eroded or residual writing that stands in sharp contrast to Richard's vision of the claw or

"griffe" of an isolated poetic and heroic figure. Rather, this inscription stands for the imprint of a fractured multitude, of an estranged and alienated people. In "Tàpies aujourd'hui" (1972), published in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin suggested that, in the case of the contemporary Catalan artist Antoni Tàpies, such an artistic inscription originates in the stammering of someone who is no longer quite human or of "a human shadow in search of its body" (118). The search for one's body is also the search for another body, for the body as other, and the attempt to break from the mere shadow or simulacrum of a dwelling.

Three years following "Tàpies aujourd'hui," the poem "Le Soleil substitué," from *Dehors* (1975),[30] claimed that the self is close—"so close"—to being "hors de soi" [outside itself],[31] and so near escaping "la morte distinction du dedans et du dehors, toujours abusivement remaçonnée par les larves du dedans" [the dead distinction between interior and exterior, always abusively rebuilt by the larva of the interior] (26). This singular self also becomes plural, and is still "si près de vomir et d'être vomis, d'être soulevés et brisés, d'être désunis, de *changer de corps*" [so close to vomiting and to being vomited, to being lifted up and broken, to being disunited, to *changing bodies*" (26). In the collection *Dehors* this "ecstatic" search alludes both to Arthur Rimbaud's "joy of new work"[32] and to the self's relationship to a "gravitation of meaningless signs." This search, in fact, is similar to Yves Bonnefoy's rejection of Mallarmé's signifying constellations, as well as to Georges Bataille and Jean-Luc Nancy's understanding of the "vestiges" of art. In *Dehors* we read: "nous sommes le non-lieu et le non-objet d'une gravitation de signes insensés. Des forces que nous ignorons, se heurtent, se composent, écroulants les vestiges, pans de mur, troncs foudroyés, lettres mortes,—et font monter le fond et ce que le fond retient et brasse,—et délivrent l'espace du travail nouveau." [we are the nonsite and the nonobject of a gravitation of meaningless signs. Forces that we do not know collide, come together, collapsing the vestiges, pieces of walls, trunks struck by lightning, dead letters—and they bring the depth to the surface, and what the depth holds back and churns—and free the space of the new work] (26). Neither fleeing before history nor seeking a purely subterranean, mythical refuge, Dupin's repeated use of the first person plural "we" does not imply an inaccessible community, but one based

on the self's eccentric relation to itself. It is an objectless, siteless, or utopian community, born of chance and senseless signs from "what the depth holds back and churns."

In his preface to *L'Embrasure*, Jean-Pierre Richard suggested that poetry's apparent subterranean flight from reality took the form of a subject delivering itself over to "the dark brutality of what is underneath, to the sacred chaos of substance" (9). Yet, Richard's use of the word "sacred" implies that he understood this downward turn into chaos as only a first moment in a dialectic that subsequently engages the subject in an upward and uplifting movement. Richard thus sacralizes matter following the same impulse that Georges Bataille had perceived and criticized in André Breton's desire to impose an organizing principle (as *logos*) onto myth. Richard also suggested that Dupin's poetry follows the model of mythological heroic mastery: "here, Being does 'acquiesce to disappear,' but to immediately 'return,' to be reborn, and to reemerge from its very disappearance" (9). Rather than this dialectical model of poetic mastery and sovereignty, however, Dupin's poetry points to the subject's lack of mastery, and to its non-dialectical character. Indeed, "Le Soleil substitué," from *Dehors*, evokes a self born of the destructive force of the "gravitation of meaningless signs": "Nous sommes le non-lieu et le non-objet de leur élan destructeur, le champ dévasté de leur conjonction et de leur divergence. Gisement à ciel ouvert. Espace de la douleur et de la chance parmi lequel, pour le dissimuler, s'élève encore, en reformant une durée absurde, l'encre du nuage, l'ébauche d'un texte impersonnel,—le commencement d'un corps éjécté de sa trajectoire" [We are the nonsite and the nonobject of their destructive momentum, the devastated field of their conjunction and of their divergence. An open mine deposit. Space of pain and chance among which, to conceal it, there still arises, reforming an absurd duration, the sketch of an impersonal text—the beginnings of a body ejected from its trajectory] (26–27). The signs of Dupin's poetry open the space of a "new work" that remains a sketch rather than of a finished work. It also remains impersonal and does not absolutely recover meaning, but reveals "what the depth holds back and churns," whereby poetry is the experience of something remaining unrevealed, withheld from knowledge, in a historical duration that can only be qualified as *absurd*. Rather than the subject's dialectical and mythological en-

tombment, and its subsequent resurrection, Dupin's poetry proposes what, in *L'Espace autrement dit*, he calls a subject that "rakes the surface and the bottom of the real" (119); not for the sake of dialectically recuperating this reality, but in order to demonstrate this dialectic's impossibility.

Jacques Dupin's series of poems entitled "L'Issue dérobée"—initially published in *L'Ephémère* (summer 1969) and republished in *L'Embrasure*—begins with the single word "Marmonnement" [Muttering] (167). These poems also suggest that what precedes "us" is not a recoupable reality, but a Baudelairean forest of signs that unceasingly modify everything: "Une forêt nous précède / et nous tient lieu de corps / et modifie les figures et dresse / la grille / d'un supplice spacieux" [A forest precedes us / and stands in for our body / and modifies the figures and raises / the rack / of a spacious torture] (168). As the title "L'Issue dérobée" implies, the end or conclusion ("l'issue") of the subject's subterranean plunge is forever deferred ("dérobée"). Dupin's poetry thus scrutinizes the limit between this subterranean realm and its emergence into the space and time of everyday life. In other words, "L'Issue dérobée" does not evoke a subterranean and mythological realm into which the poet flees in order to ground, to dissolve, or to open onto the subject's historical temporality—the poet would occupy the thanatographic site of a voice from beyond the origin of history. "L'Issue dérobée" also suggests that poetry writes a body ("corps") "[that] is not resolved" [ne se résout pas] (173). It evokes a fire "qui s'allume au loin / [qui] rafraîchira la brûlure / et la fin de tout poème / et son recommencement sans fin" [lit in the distance / [that] will refresh the burning / and the end of any poem / and its endless beginning] (182), and it searches for the site where what comes from below ("sou-venir") clashes heterogeneously with what is yet to come ("a-venir"). Poetry thus expresses mythology's inability to ground and condition a future site. The poem nevertheless also gives voice to our inability to absolutely envision or project a future free from the temptation to recoil back onto the mythological.

The clash of past and future is also one between interior and exterior forms of perception and consciousness. In the poem entitled "La Ligne de rupture," from the collection *Dehors*, this clash occurs at a moment where it is "la peau du dehors qui se retourne et nous absorbe" [the skin of the exterior that turns inside out and absorbs us] (9). It occurs in the moment when an "excessive lumière échancrée" [excessive serrated light] (31) appears, a light that is capable of altering an overly restrictive, authoritarian mode of communication. In another essay on Tàpies entitled "Devant Tàpies" (1967), equally published in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin suggested that this clash originates in a peculiar interaction between the insistent, immediately fascinating song of prelinguistic reality—what he called "matter's heavy and insistent song" (106)—and linguistically mediated reality. Yet this interaction is without dialectical resolution. It is a series of "saccades" or "fits and starts,"[33] where the enchantment of fiction and *mythos* intersects with the disenchantment of supposedly objective narratives (*logos*). On the one hand, prelinguistic reality exerts "an extreme fascination on the mind that aspires, obscurely, to mix with what is most foreign to it, to join the very substance that repudiates it" (106); on the other hand, "there is another way of seeing" through which "bewitchment becomes reading" (107). This *second sight* is called reading, by which the subject distances itself from the fascination of material immediacy.

In *Rien encore, tout déjà* (1990), Jacques Dupin characterized his poems as "habitations tremblantes sur pilotis, sur vide / et l'empreinte d'un corps écrit, volatilisé" [trembling dwellings on pilings, on emptiness / and the imprint of a written, volatilized body].[34] The title of this collection recalls not only Paul Celan's "Le Méridien," in which the poem moves incessantly from its "Déjà-plus à son Toujours-encore" [Already-no-longer to its Always-still] (15), but also Joan Miró's "object-sculptures," which Dupin, in *Miró* (1993), suggests are made up of "ces déchets qui ne sont rien, presque rien, rien encore. Et tout va se passer entre ce *presque rien* et ce *rien encore*" [this waste that is nothing, almost nothing, still nothing. And everything is going to happen between this *almost nothing* and this *still nothing*] (333).[35] As a series of quaking sites supported by uncertain pilings or by nothing ("sur vide"), Dupin's poetry also unfolds on what the collection *Echancré* (1991) calls "un clavier à la dérive" [a keyboard adrift].[36] As the source of writing and rhythm, this keyboard is "sans point d'ancrage, sans point de mire" [without anchoring point, without a focal point] (24).[37] It is neither tied to an anterior object ("sans point d'ancrage") nor to an anticipated or deter-

minable future object ("sans point de mire").[38] Dupin also referred to this interstice, in *Rien encore, tout déjà*, as the condition inherent to "l'homme divisé," and to "l'homme ouvert," where this divided man disappears, yet endlessly: "on massacre, on sacrifie / l'homme ouvert que j'affectionne et que je dis / ses traces et lui sans fin disparaissent" [the open man I am attached to and of whom I speak / is massacred / sacrificed / he and his traces endlessly disappear] (14).

In *Le grésil* (1996), Dupin related the self's division to "la dérive d'un sous-homme, / et la langue éparpillée" [the drifting of a subhuman, / and a scattered tongue].[39] He thus reiterated the possibility of a divided space and of a subject whose freedom is not totally sealed off. Just as persistently, Dupin noted that forces of massacre, sacrifice, and totalization threaten this space; threatened by what "Moraines" calls "un mal insidieux, une puissance d'annulation, qui abolit tout espace et toute semence d'espace. Une vague de béton qui colmate la dernière faille du cœur rocheux. La disparition de l'homme divisé que je suis depuis la pré-histoire, ouvrirait un nouvel age de l'espèce dont la perspective glace le sang" [an insidious evil, a power of annihilation, abolishing all space and all seed of space. A wave of concrete sealing the last fault in the rocky heart. The disappearance of the divided man that I am since prehistoric times would usher in a new age of the species, the prospect of which is bloodcurdling] (141). The suggested power of annihilation recalls Jean Paris's remarks regarding the impact of World War II on poetry, and refers to a sociotechnical power seeking to appropriate and choke off ("colmater") all possibility of speaking out against "a false chronology,"[40] even if only through what Dupin named, in *Cendrier du voyage*, "the cracking of its misunderstood and unfamiliar voice" (11). This "semence d'espace" also confronts a form of power in which, according to Jean-Luc Nancy, meanings are "diluted, to the point of meaninglessness, into ideologies based on values."[41] Yet, it also recognizes the risk inherent in this opposition, which would be to valorize alterity and division for their own sake, in which case "a sutureless surgery maintains the fissure in meaning wide open, through the style of an aestheticizing minimalism."[42]

Clearly, if Dupin's poetry pulverizes "a false chronology" it is not to dialectically recover an "integral world" beyond a first moment of rupture. This pulverization manifests the endless, infinite, and never absolute nature of division. As Dupin wrote in *Contumace* (1986): "la division qui nous porte, et nous dérègle, / nous approvisionne, à n'atteindre jamais le point / / de rencontre avec qui l'absout, / et nous couvre de terre, de feuilles, de musique" [the division that carries us, and unsettles us, / supplies us, to never attain the meeting / / point with what absolves it, / and covers us with earth, leaves, music] (30). The distinction between an integral world and Dupin's divided man is similar to the one René Char established between "the claw of a new seafaring bird" and "a few lines in the sand." To believe in the possibility of a future "integral world" would be to believe that, through the force of its solitary flight above the ship of history (since Char speaks of a "seafaring bird"), this claw or "griffe" can reinscribe what for Jean-Pierre Richard is, in the end, the only possible historical destiny of mankind: the inscription of the spirit of history in the work of art.

The affirmation of an "integral world" is a Richardian leitmotif of American criticism of contemporary French poetry. Richard Stamelman, for instance, reads the works of the poets of *L'Ephémère* as engaged in what he terms the "reproduction of ontological difficulty."[43] He also relates Dupin's poetry to the vaguely Heideggerian perspective of Jean-Pierre Richard's understanding of Dupin's poems as the violent and abrupt "*dévoilement* de l'être" [unveiling of being] that also "unveils" being as "impenetrable and inaccessible" (278).[44] As René Char pointed out as early as 1950, and as the preceding pages demonstrate, such an unveiling inscription is absent from Dupin's poetry. In its place Dupin opposes another bird to the "seafaring bird": Georges Braque's solitary bird in the series entitled *L'Atelier*. In "Le Nuage en échec" (1956), published in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin proposed that Braque's bird is real, "in no way mythological," and that it represents "the work's emanation or excess" (74) similar to an "excedent of energy" and to "a few lines in the sand." Rather than embracing the ideology underlying Richard's "griffe" and "integral world," Dupin's perspective is nearer to what he calls "the diction of becoming, in its violence and its musical flexion," and to the musical inscription of "a few lines" capable of "pulveriz[ing] a false chronology."[45]

The stakes of pulverizing false chronologies can best be under-

stood by considering Jacques Dupin's series of essays (written between 1958 and 1972) on Antoni Tàpies. In "Tàpies aujourd'hui" (1972), in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin suggested that Tàpies's works are replete with signs that are not so much discursive as they are the inversion of discourse: an art form altering and perverting the discursive sign itself. For Dupin, Tàpies produces "simulacra: recognizable but unreadable signs, identifiable and without identity" (116). As with the "impersonal text" that Dupin evokes in "Le Soleil substitué," these signs become "anonymous paraphs" (116), as well as "graffiti, imprints, traces, glyphs" (118), which are produced only once they have been "insidiously adulterated, struck dumb, become the sign of nonsense or, rather, the expectation of meaning" (116). Tàpies's works thus inscribe the "inarticulate" and all that "in common memory, in common forgetting, remains floating . . . the scoria of thought and of sleep, the bits of a scattered language still within a hand's reach" (117–18). Dupin also suggests that Tàpies's art not only produces signs that are their own simulacra, it also evokes the "shattered reflection of traditional knowledge," and resists being reduced to socially prescribed meanings. Tàpies presents "the mute world of injunction and daily resistance . . . the trace becomes energy, quietly incorporated" (116), through which "the man to come sketches a rectification through the raised edges of the pastes, the crumpling of the sands, the inscription of the mute sign and the recognition of scattered things" (119). Not only can the trace be mistaken for a sign, it can also outmaneuver its appropriation as a sign. As such, the trace is both historical and ahistorical. It is the point of convergence for a timeless or prehistoric man and the recent wounds of history, in this case the Catalan resistance to General Franco during the Spanish Civil War: "Bluntly put, Tàpies is also the resistance of the Catalan people to oppression under Franco. . . . [Tàpies] scrapes the surface and the bottom of the real. Through an active materialism that is also, for him, the broken reflection of traditional knowledge, he denounces the horrifying misery of our civilization, and the monstrous exploitation on which it is founded" (119). Rather than creating signs that inscribe a comprehensible history, Tàpies produces traces that emblematize this history, that confront historical discourse with its nonfigural other, with the scream or with the murmur of exasperated desire and need.

In a postscriptum to "Avant toute lecture la déflagration," the fourth in the series of essays on Tàpies, Dupin again considers the role of anonymity in art: "As though the exterior [Comme si le dehors] was both incrusted in flesh and bounced off the skin, in a muted and long vibration. Spatial repetition, or contained between two blinks of an eye, the splitting of a word, a sign's insisting on letting itself be covered over and to show through beneath the following, a stretched screen, with folds of emptiness and fits and starts" (122). Dupin repeats the words "comme si le dehors . . ." throughout this text, thus retracing both the movement he perceives in the works of Tàpies and one proper to his own poetry. The marks or the signs of a painting persist but in altered form: they are repeated, split, or decomposed by the following mark, sign, or word. But, through the sign's "insistence," what appears is no longer a *sign*, but "the trace and the open work of an imprisoned existence and the diffracted brilliance of its imminent escape" (122). The existence that is imprisoned is not solely *ontological*, but also an *ontical*, political, and historical existence, as Dupin clearly stated in *Miró*, regarding Miró's triptych *Peintures pour la cellule d'un solitaire* (1968): "The solitary figure is the confined prisoner with nothing but his fingernails to transcribe the cardiogram of his sufferings and hopes on the roughcast cell walls" (320). The palimpsest-like spatial repetition and alteration of the signs, words or single lines of a work of art yield the impression of a trace that, rather than appearing to originate from within the sign's meaning, seems to emanate from without, and seems to invent this unexpected exterior: "Comme si le dehors." In "Antoni Tàpies papiers et cartons" (1963), in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin suggested that Tàpies superimposes various disjecta (discarded paper and cardboard) to produce "bits of a narrative whose course we will never know," and to manifest "the traces of man's passage, the marks of a long and monotonous intimacy with him" (101–2). As such, Tàpies's works reject a closed system of signs, and are the repository for a vestigial knowledge of human activity. They are "the manifestations of incorporated time" (102), whose multiple traces create a turbulent site able to overturn and to reveal new potential meanings as well as overthrow past meanings.

With regards to poetry, Tàpies's traces extend into a future that Dupin's "Moraines" characterizes as "all future pain scat-

tered beyond us" (163).[46] In *L'Embrasure*, in the poem entitled "La Nuit grandissante"(1968), Dupin writes: "De retour parmi vous / le dépot dont j'ai la garde / est-il visible dans son tourbillon? / Parmi vous, et ne servant à rien / qu'au désordre, / qu'aux semailles" [Back among you / the depot I preserve / is it visible through its whirlwind? / Among you, and serving no purpose / other than disorder, / other than sowing] (115). The poet returns from an unknown place to unleash disorder in the community. Yet, disorder also sustains this place. The poetic self is the guardian of the scoriaceous traces of disorder's reserve, which is the condition of possibility of community. The poet preserves what the poem "La Répétition," in *L'Embrasure*, calls "cela qui dans la parole scintille et se tait" [what glitters in words then becomes silent] (93). As with the return of the character known as "Thomas" in *L'Eboulement* (1977), Jacques Dupin's sole published play, the poet returns to a society from which he remains distinct, since in "La Nuit grandissante" Dupin uses the locution "parmi vous," whereby the poet is both among and separate from the other members of the community. He returns bearing not only some external reserve, but to signal that this reserve might already have been present within this community. His return is thus also the promise to "disorder" the community's historical horizon, as Dupin wrote in *L'Eboulement*: "des paroles futures / toi et moi / sans descendance. . . . C'est cela, revenir" [future words / you and I / without descent. . . . So it is, to return].[47]

In response to the events of May 1968, Dupin wrote "L'Irreversible," published in *L'Ephémère*, in which the silent spark of "La Nuit grandissante" becomes "[les] signes du soulèvement [qui] s'expriment, en s'inversant, sur les murs, le papier, en un soulèvement de signes. Une rupture compacte. La transparence, accourue des lointains, qui balbutie" [(the) signs of uprising that express themselves, through their inversion, on the walls, on paper, into an uprising of signs. A compact rupture. The transparence that rushed up from the distance, that stammers].[48] Graffiti inscribes the inarticulate, what is both nondiscursive and without-art, yet in doing so it also signifies rebellion and rupture. It expresses the spark of meaning where the signs of rebellion explosively collide with the rebellion of the signs against their predetermined use and meaning. As the Italian historian Mario Pezzella suggests: "In each 'here-and-now' that has fallen out of favor or been ignored by 'progressive' history, there hides a spark of meaning, and only correspondance with what is current can reveal it."[49] In terms of Dupin's poetry this spark of meaning is not only a positive revelation, but also one that perpetually bears the spark's negative power to overturn a given historical meaning. The spark of meaning is also that which has not been assimilated by thought; thought's scoria, composed of a scattered language raking the surface of the realities of progessive histories that are blind to what Dupin called, in *L'Espace autrement dit*, "the frightening misery of our civilization, and the monstrous exploitation that founds it" (119).

There are no linguistic signs for what thought cannot assimilate, only traces of thought's failure, scoria. In "Fragments dans les marges d'un texte de Michel Leiris" (1984), Dupin suggested that what Francis Bacon's "*Studies of the Human Body* reveal, beyond the marks of inflicted cruelty, is the extreme insolence of the energy with which they are overflowing" furthermore, this energy "carries us beyond ourselves," and brings about what Dupin calls "the inversion of signs."[50] The sign's signifying power is muted, yet this muteness takes the form of the trace of another narrative history, or even of another humanism, which, as Maurice Blanchot suggested five months prior to May 1968, cannot be defined in accordance with "the *logos* of a definition," since it is closer to "the scream of need or of protest, the scream that is without words, without silence, an unspeakable scream or, strictly speaking, the written scream, the graffitti on the barriers."[51] The "written scream" is the object of what Dupin had called a *second sight*, a scream that, once written, must be *read*. This written scream also denies the logic of authorship whereby a signatory claims this scream as his own. During an interview, Joan Miró suggested that in art "a profoundly individualistic gesture is anonymous," and that by "being anonymous, it can attain universality."[52] In *Miró*, Dupin responded to these comments by suggesting that the search "for a profoundly individual *gesture* from which would result the anonymity and the universality of the *act*, explains the similarity between the works from this period with their eminently anonymous forms of expression, graffiti" (308). Graffiti, like the written scream, wields another power, similar to the power that comes from stammering ("bal-

butiement"), which "jogs within us buried thought, unformulated words" (312), and that attacks the articulations of dominant semantic codes. For Dupin, as for Miró and Tàpies, these attacks take the form of the traces of graffiti, the overlay of images and words drawn from what Dupin, in *L'Espace autrement dit*, calls "a savage reserve" (118).[53]

Considering Dupin in terms of the visual arts of the postwar era has led us far afield from readings that suggest his poetry attempts to say "Being" or to "reproduce ontological difficulty"; far afield from readings such as Richard Stamelman's, for whom poetry's "highest goal . . . is, according to Paul de Man, not only to speak *of* Being, but to say Being itself."[54] The notion of poetry's "highest goal" parallels Jean-Pierre Richard's notion of a poetic project whose goal is an end. This notion transforms poetry into an activity whose end goal is the communication of its own authenticity or ontological foundation: the immediate communication of Being or "saying Being itself." What this interpretation overlooks is that Paul de Man's reading of poetry (in this case Hölderlin's) focuses on its ontical and historical characteristics. De Man did write: "How can one not only speak *of* Being, but say Being itself."[55] Though critical of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, de Man is nevertheless faithful to the philosopher's assertion (regarding Nietzsche) that "the decisive question is that of the *meaning of Being*, not merely that of the Being of beings,"[56] to which de Man pertinently added: "Poetry is the experience of this question."[57] The "experience of poetry"—as opposed to its goal—lies in the subject's relation to an event's historically mediate ontical manifestation of Being, and in the subsequent impossibility of an immediate relation. Poetry is, in other words, the experience of the slash or the trace limiting and refuting the possibility of an immediate relation between nature and its technological or formal manifestation. The reality addressed by Dupin's poetry is inseparable from this trace of the historical opacity of everyday life.[58]

In his 1970 essay entitled "Valerio Adami," published in *L'Espace autrement dit*, Dupin underscored the inherently social nature of the contemporary Italian painter's artistic reality: "Cleaned to the bone, simplified to the point of being evident, accentuated to the point of rupture, we are confronted with everyday asphyxiating and mutilating reality" (199). In the same

collection, regarding Miró, Dupin suggested that such art is involved in "the elucidation of a tumultuous present. Signs no longer transcribed from a known vocabulary, but from the debris and the roots of *ruptured language*" (188). Several years earlier, in 1964, Yves Bonnefoy also had recognized the historical importance of graffiti in Joan Miró's postwar art: "Graffiti testifies, precisely, against man's project to constitute himself as a person and to lose himself in a moral. . . . Graffiti and the primitive arts, long forgotten and neglected, were discovered and rediscovered in these postwar years."[59] In 1962, in *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin considered Giacometti's works from much the same historical context, and insisted that to view works by Giacometti is also to sense their temporal incongruity and their rebellion in the face of the rest of the works in the exhibition space. Indeed, for Dupin, Giacometti's works contradict both "the meaning and the foundation" of other works, and even challenge "their existence as works of art" (12). The tension between Giacometti's works and those of other artists replicates the dialectic between art forms founded and semantically dependent upon the unifying power of (literary) historical comprehension, and art forms that evoke a singular, horrific (re)membrance of faces surging from a depth that has become historically unpronounceable: "Why didn't we chase these men, walking against time, from our cities, this woman standing in defiant silence, and so many insistent, haunting faces that erupt from the walls as though they were proof of this depth whose name we no longer have the right to pronounce?" (12). Dupin focuses on the barbarism embedded in the house of culture, and on the possibilities of undermining the collector's attempt to encapsulate the "history of art" within the museum or private collection. The juxtaposition of Giacometti's works with those of other artists transforms the museum into a house of horrors. As such, Giacometti's art resists what Adorno called the "museal" transformation of artworks into "objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present."[60] In *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin suggested that Giacometti's figures walk against time, stripping away the veneer of unthinking cultural respect through their character of "petrified incompletion" (9). His art disrupts the finished work of art. Its

palimpsest-like quality is shot through with the temporal process during which it is produced, thereby challenging the brackets bounding a given art-historical moment. The repeated strokes of Giacometti's pencil erase these boundaries. As Dupin wrote in another essay on Giacometti, entitled "La Réalité impossible" and published in *L'Espace autrement dit*, these strokes allow "emptiness to circulate" (56), and they "set a duration into motion" [met en œuvre une durée] (61). Within the museum, this duration is communicated to other works, waking them from their art-historical entombment, so that they might begin to return the gaze of the viewer, and to undermine both the collector's necrology and the necrophilic relation between the viewer and the works.

Giacometti's art and Dupin's poetry reject the conception of art as a direct testimonial to an unpronounceable depth, which Paul Ricœur reads as art's evocation of *tremendum horrendum*. For Ricœur, referring specifically to World War II and to the victims of the Holocaust (whom he names "the delegates in our memory for all the victims of history"): "The role of fiction, in this memory of the horrible, is a corollary of the power, as of the admiration, to address events whose express *unicity* matters. . . . Horror isolates by rendering incomparable, incomparably unique, uniquely unique."[61] Though Dupin's writings can be read in terms of horror as "uniquely unique," it is only insofar as his poetry undermines the structural position of the "uniquely unique"; only insofar as it causes such a notion to infinitely repeat itself in its own inability to fully "come to terms" with its own uniqueness. Dupin's poetry neither expresses Ricœur's iconoclasm nor does the horror of the unpronounceable become, in his poetry, an unambiguous signifying authority whereby fiction is absorbed into the ethical task of bearing witness to that which cannot be witnessed, and of speaking for the unspeakable. His poetry questions whether it really is up to art to substantiate propositions such as the following from Ricœur: "Horror affixes itself to events that it is necessary *to never forget*. It constitutes the ultimate ethical motivation of the history of the victims."[62] Ricœur's "ultimate ethics" of the necessarily unforgettable event further subjugates poetry to moral and ethical necessity by suggesting that each and every "*Mythos* is made up of a latent *Logos* that demands to be exhibited."[63] His conception of *mythos* is

predicated on the assumption that art's project, goal, or will is to "resolve" itself in an "ultimately ethical" *logos*. For Dupin and the poets of *L'Ephémère*, however, the poem, like Giacometti's art, does not so much proceed from the desire or compulsion to reconcile poetic or painterly form with an ethical imperative, as from the sense that the artistic process is the continued and perpetual questioning of form: from the sense that artistic form is, *a priori*, deformed and unresolved. In *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin writes: "Form is never immobilized by an outline [cerne], finalized in isolated and certain lines. . . . It proceeds from a multitude of lines that straddle one another, correct one another, surcharge one another, and are abolished as lines through their multiplication" (31–32). The event is unique only because it perpetually takes on another form, only because it might reveal itself through this perpetual deferral and deformation of the unique, which is also the perpetual deformation of horror and of the ethical imperative.

Dupin's more recent poetry evokes the figure's projection not through memory, but through forgetfulness; a projection that does not highlight the figure, but that risks dissipating it though what the poem "Chanfrein," in *Echancré* (1991), calls an "unlacerated narrative": "avancée de toute figure, par l'oubli qui grésille à l'extrémité de la faille. Et ruisselle sur les fragments. Excédant l'image. écrivant les lointains . acérant le trait qui traverse la bouche—les saccades de la bouche" [projection of any figure, by the forgetfulness that crackles at the fault's extremity. And streams over the fragments. Exceeding the image. writing the distances. sharpening the stroke across the mouth—the mouth's fits and starts] (72–73). Similarly, Giacometti's figures appear as a "given" historical form, but only insofar as they "take [the] place" of this form, appropriating and transforming the traditional history in which these figures take place. More specifically, in *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche* Dupin suggests that it is the history of the representation of the human figure that is transformed: "The human representation is replaced by that of a monstrous being and of a pursued monster, inert and as though frozen between two torments. . . . In following it we slide into an infra-human region. We experience the dismantling of the human edifice through the uprising, the insurrection of the very matter of which it is made. We are impli-

cated in this ultimate degradation" (28). As such, Giacometti's figures do not so much reveal man's human dignity as their relation to the "chaos from which the character has arisen, to which it returns, and of which one did not dare admit that man was so close" (28). The temporal relationship established between the viewer and Giacometti's art is not simply the advent of a new, progressive, and totalizing hermeneutics of human history; nor does this relationship tend toward the renewed closure of temporality inherent in the finished or total work of art. Rather, Giacometti's artworks are both the products and the producers of what Dupin has named the artist's "insignificant" decisions; decisions through which Giacometti simply "interrupts the work he has been working on," to which Dupin added: "the work is unique, it is unfinished, it is impossible" (56).[64]

The arbitrary and insignificant ruptures in the artwork imply the artist's refusal to finish it. They express the impossibility that the artwork be a finished signifying totality, and they thereby denounce a world history that posits the artwork as end or as the corporeal manifestation of the spirit of history. The discourse that attempts to comprehend Giacometti's sculptural objects falls into its own contradictions and produces, in Dupin's words, only "the scrambled traces of an approach, scattered fragments" that refer to "an imaginary edifice that had to be abandoned" (8). A reason for the viewer's failure to comprehend the artwork is that it overwhelms and interrupts one's temporal experience of the piece. When the viewer would wish to grasp the work in its totality, to call it a finished work, the work reveals itself to be, still and always, beginning: "at the instant that I dream of grabbing it and fleeing with it, Giacometti's work begins, Giacometti's work without beginning continues" (15). In other words, Giacometti's works promise the onset of historical duration without ever beginning in such a way that this duration might end.

As with the discourse between Giacometti's sculptures and the viewer, that between Dupin's poetry and his readers can be described as an event defined through the figural dimension of an artistic discourse that does not and cannot account for its own beginnings, and where the figural status of poetic language is such that "a figure is not totally converted in the set of interferences and evocations that it elicits. It suggests that, even when interpreted, a figure can persist through tensional residue."[65]

The figuration of the struggle between the origin of the temporal event and its formal interruption is not so much an attempt to capture and reconcile this event with a metahistorical notion of duration, as it is the denunciation of this historical model. Thus, Adorno wondered whether "denunciation is made possible only through figuration,"[66] to which André du Bouchet answered for the poets of *L'Ephémère* during a 1984 interview, "representation is unceasingly traversed,"[67] meaning that the traversal of representation is also its denunciation through a process of figuration and representation that reveals a remaining, unassimilated "tensional residue."

In *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin claims that Giacometti's art refuses to be interpreted as the expression of absolute Being and absolute History, and that it exists in a strictly defined space beyond which his figures cannot venture without running the risk of "being sent back to the chaos from which they originated or of being condemned to the agonizing lucidity of the gods, to their annihilation in a sacred space that gives them the rigidity, but not the appeasment, of the dead" (29–30). Dupin thus simultaneously rejects art as the exploration of a mythological prelinguistic chaos and art as the evocation of a postlinguistic sacred community, and calls on us "to free ourselves, us, from the ancient terror." This does not mean that Dupin disavows the fascination inherent in these poles. He concedes the eternally nostalgic relation between art and the sacred, yet, rather than what *L'Espace autrement dit* calls "a sterile fascination" (81) with the immediacy of being, art is the experience of *the question* of the "meaning of Being." As Dupin wrote in *Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*: "[Giacometti] attacks appearances and delves into the real to the point of making visible the essence of their relation, which is to say the presence of a sacred element. This sacred, nostalgia for which is expressed by all of modern art, this sacred, lack of which elicits efforts that are as poignant as they are sterile, Giacometti flushes it out and wakes it there where it hides, deep within each thing and each being" (82). The sacred exists only in man's relation to the real, and is expressed only through a form of art that also cuts through, flushes out, and reveals the "poignant sterility" of the attempt to reveal, through art, the sacred. By means of the creative, poetic act, the sacred simultaneously appears and disappears: "There is nothing sacred

except through the excessive relationship between man and the real, through the impossible communication of one with all that is established, unique threshold and thunderbolt, through the division of oneself and the division of the other, the totalizing power of the creative act" (82). The trace moment of an impossible communication between the finite and the infinite both founds and undermines the sacred itself. Similarly, in *Echancré*, through the writing of poetry the gods appear, but only to die, and writing continues "sur leurs traces" [on their tracks] (50).

Dupin's poetry rejects an ultimate *logos* underlying a "uniquely unique" event become Myth. It also rejects Paul Ricœur's proposal that all "Mythos" contains a "latent Logos."[68] Rather, Dupin evokes what André du Bouchet, in *Dans la chaleur vacante* (1961), called the event's lack of uniqueness, a "singular instant of memory that is almost immediately taken away from us, but of which we also have the premonition that it cannot be unique."[69] Dupin's criticism of an art form that presents itself as able to elicit the sacred thus parallels Jacques Rancière's consideration of the fallacious "suturing" of philosophy's *logos* to poetry's own misunderstood *logos*: "criticism of this *suture* attempts to demonstrate the following: for philosophy to submit to the measure of poetry is perhaps to misunderstand the very measure of the poem's *logos*, as distinguished from the poet's *mythos*, from the enchantment of music, and the priesthood of origins."[70] If there is a *logos* of the poem, then it is not to be found in the myth of a bewitching language of origins and uniqueness emanating from the person of the poet as prophet or visionary. As early as *Gravir*, Dupin suggests that the poet's nightly task is to deepen a grave occupied by no-body: "Mon corps, tu n'occuperas pas la fosse / Que je creuse, que j'approfondis chaque nuit" [My body, you will not occupy the grave / That I dig, that I deepen nightly] (80). In "Traille de l'aïeul," from the collection entitled *Chansons troglodytes* (1989), Dupin wrote: "Plus bas que tes ossements / ma pelle dégageant le souffle" [Further down than your bones / my shovel disentangles the breath],[71] and in *L'Embrasure* he suggests that the poet endeavors to reach a site beyond or beneath the remains of the dead, in which he may write: "je tutoie les morts" [I speak familiarly with the dead], or in which he may speak in what the poem "Le Point du jour" calls "les dialectes de l'abîme" [the dialects of the abyss] (89). The digging of this tomb is not the attempted reconciliation and mutual annihilation of Being and History, but the attempt to undermine their existence as absolutes. But to what "end" does the poet engage in this undertaking, if not for the sake of reclaiming what Jean-Pierre Richard, in his preface to *L'Embrasure*, called "the dark brutality of what is underneath"(9)?

At first reading, the goal of the subterranean task might seem to be the disinterment of a lost breath or inspiration—"souffle," read in the ecclesiastical sense of insufflation and the expulsion of evil—as in the following poem from the section "Fragmes" in *Echancré*:

> Les anges n'écrivent pas. les arbres, les fleurs, les bêtes n'écrivent pas . . . les dieux, même morts écrivent . . . ils détiennent le souffle, le frein, la scansion, le rythme,—et l'immortalité de l'espace ouvert qu'on leur arrache brin par brin . . . ils écrivent, à la condition d'être mort—comme j'écris moi, en les arrachant de la terre, à la condition d'être mort—et ils viennent à l'improviste, ils soufflent dans mon pipeau l'aria de la mort légère. (48)
>
> [The angels do not write. the trees, the flowers, the beasts do not write . . . the gods, even dead write . . . they possess the breath, the bit, the scansion, the rhythm,—and the immortality of the open space that we tear away from them blade by blade . . . they write, on the condition of being dead—as I write, pulling up earth, on the condition of being dead—and they come unexpectedly, they blow in my reed-pipe the aria of light death.]

Writing is not simply the disentangling ("dégagement") of this "souffle," by means of which a deity might return. Writing also implies the disengagement of the deities' power, which sends them on their way, away from finite living beings. Writing frees the deity from what Dupin, in his preface to René Char's *Le Monde de l'art n'est pas le monde du pardon*, had called "the poem's underground [sous-sol]" (5); but it also frees the living from the deity's "terrible" immortality. In *Dehors*, again evoking this subterranean region as the site of poetry's hidden reserve, Dupin suggests that the poet seeks to hear or feel "ce qui gronde dans le sous-sol, sous la feuille déchirée, sous nos pas. Et voudrait s'élever,—s'écrire. Et attire l'écriture, lui injecte son intensité, son incohérence . . . Ce qui crie et bat dans le sous-sol" [what

growls in the underground, beneath the torn leaf, beneath our steps. And would like to rise up,—to be written. And attracts writing, injects it with its intensity, its incoherence . . . What screams and beats in the underground] (26). What is freed from below—horror, the absolute, the sacred, also the absolute horror of the sacred—is submitted to mortality, to the finite, and to the levity of death ("la mort légère"). As Dupin writes in *Echancré*: "Ecrire dans le souffle des dieux qui meurent . . . sur leurs traces . . . dormir sans l'éternité, sans jamais l'éternité" [To write in the breath of the dying gods . . . on their tracks . . . to sleep without eternity, without ever eternity] (50). Writing frees this infinite "souffle," but also marks this infinity with its own finitude. The moment the infinite breath is disengaged it also expires or becomes syncopated with the "fits and starts" of poetic rhythm and scansion.[72]

In terms of the contemporary improbability of a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Jacques Dupin's poetry does not seek to bring about the return of an absolute History or Being through the medium of poetry. Rather, his poetry inscribes its trace impossibility; it begins to sketch out what Celan named "the impossible path of the Impossible" or, as Dupin suggested in *Echancré* (1991), "Ecrire étant la traversée du souffle, l'impossible traversée . . . étant l'impossible" [Writing being the traversal of the breath, the impossible traversal . . . the impossible] (36).[73] By proposing that poetry is "la traversée du souffle" and "l'impossible traversée" (36), *Echancré* suggests that poetry does not so much attempt to free and establish a messianic "souffle," as to undermine its absolute nature—since this nature would not simply provide a shelter for the subject confronted with the "sadistic onslaughts of History," but would also annihilate the subject by positioning it in an absolutely articulated ahistorical destiny. The poem "Le Soleil substitué," published in *Dehors*, dissociates writing from this absolute (end of) horizon, all the while already considering poetry in terms of the adjective "échancré":

> Même puissance et nature de souffle, pourtant le poème n'est pas l'écriture de la révolution. Travaillé en son fond par les mêmes ferments, il la rejoint, la recoupe, s'en écarte, lui répond. Il incorpore son imminence, exaspère son injonction. Il recueille et réactive sa trace dans la matérialité déchirée, sa réitération ouverte. Il répercute son éclat alentour.

> Et lorsqu'elle est prise à la glu, lorsqu'un horizon tranche les poings levés, et que cesse de voyager, de lèvre en lèvre, la bouchée de pain aigre, le poème ressaisit, et transporte au-delà de leur compréhension, son excessive lumière échancrée. Il demeure, pendant son reploiement, l'axe du renversement du réel, la puissance de dislocation qui féconde. Et relance. (31)

> [Same power and nature as breathing, yet the poem is not the writing of the revolution. Worked over in its depth by the same ferments, its comes close to revolution, confirms it, distances itself from it, answers it. The poem incorporates revolution's imminence, exasperates its injunction. It gathers and reactivates its trace in torn materiality, its open reiteration. It echoes its spark all around.
>
> And when revolution is caught in the trap, when a horizon cuts through the upraised fists, and when ceases to travel, from lip to lip, the mouthful of bitter bread, the poem recaptures, and carries beyond their comprehension, its excessive serrated light. It remains, during its retraction, the axis for overthrowing the real, the power of dislocation that fecundates. And revitalizes.]

Though the poem intersects with the "souffle" of revolution, it also strays from and exasperates revolution's injunction. It strays from revolution's power to conjoin a population to a given cause. The poem differs from this "souffle" in that it is the reserve in or out of which the trace of revolution is recollected and activated. Thus the poem is not the "absolute" light of revolution and inspiration, but a "serrated light." "Le Soleil substitué" also illustrates the link between Dupin's poetry and Bonnefoy's attempted synthesis of poetry (Rimbaud's "change life") and revolution (Marx's "transform the world"). In this respect, however, Dupin is closer to Michel Leiris than to Bonnefoy. In *L'Age d'homme* Leiris reconsidered his relation to poetry and to surrealism's revolutionary ambitions as follows: "As radical as it may be, no transformation of the world is capable of absolutely changing my life, conditioned in particular by my certainty that I will be called upon to die. There is a part of me that revolution, even completely accomplished, would leave intact, and it is to this rebellious part that poetry, itself a rebel, addresses itself, and into this compost that it plunges its roots."[74] The poem plunges into that part of the self left intact by even the absolute manifestation of revolution. It acts as revolution's reserve—its Nietzschean *stimulans*—

preserving revolution from being hypostatized into an absolute ideological horizon. Dupin thus also disputes the contention that poetry is founded on what Michel Beaujour, in 1967, called an "oriented and teleologically organized future."[75] Poetry carries the breath or inspiration of revolution as an "excessive serrated light" into a realm beyond the comprehension of beings subjected to or "caught in the trap" of a given ideological horizon. It perpetuates the reserve of revolution within the poem: "An increase in the light around it dissimulates it even better, and under other borrowed clothes, it voyages."[76] The poem acts as the reserve for the subject's revolutionary and communal potential by activating what, in the collection *Dehors*, is named "l'antériorité de la trace, un arrière chuchotement, une enclave intraduisible" [the trace's anteriority, a background whisper, an untranslatable enclave] (107).

The title of Jacques Dupin's collection *Contumace* (1986) already implies a rebellious or "reserved" witness, conflating poetry and politics, this time evoking the vacant site of poetry's reserve:

> tout agencement de mots est politique,
> est vacant, glacé,
> appelle une lecture politique, est vacant
>
> ou prisonnier de la contradiction qu'il enferme,
> lié aux catégories, transits, pivots,
>
> —et la devance, la vivant,—ou la répudie,
> se croyant libre,—et vacant (34)
>
> [Any arrangement of words is political,
> is vacant, frozen,
> calls for a political reading, is vacant
>
> or prisoner of the contradiction it contains,
> bound to categories, transits, pivots,
>
> —and anticipates it, living it,—or repudiates it,
> believing itself free,—and vacant.]

As the repetition of the adjective "vacant" implies, the vacancy of words forever returns to outpace and to anticipate ("devance")

the political nature or political interpretation of these words, but it does not absolutely dismiss the political. Rather, the poem evokes both the condition of possibility of the political and repudiates a specific political reading that would attempt to occupy the perpetually vacant site—the condition or reserve of the political reading or event itself. Thus Dupin is not averse to publishing circumstantial and politically motivated poems such as "L'Irréversible" (May 1968) and the poem *George Jackson* (1973), published as a placard with a lithography by Paul Rebeyrolle, following the death of the imprisoned Black Panther member George Jackson[77]:

> L'odeur du sang retourne le remugle
> du cachot
> il est seul avec sa blessure
> et les chiens se sont couchés
> Dressé contre les verrous du ciel blanc
> il sait qu'il a tout rendu possible
> en mourant assassiné
> Même ici le sang qu'il verse
> c'est la nuit du sous-bois qui l'absorbe
> avec le rayon brisé du soleil.
>
> [The smell of the blood stirs up the stench
> of the prison cell
> he is alone with his wound
> and the dogs are lying down
> Raised up against the locks of the white sky
> he knows he has made everything possible
> by dying assassinated
> Even here the blood he spills
> is absorbed by the night of the underbrush
> with the sun's broken ray.]

Handwritten with a red lithographer's crayon, this poem stands midway between Dupin's series of poems entitled "Sang," first published in *L'Ephémère* (fall 1971), and the version of this poem written in red ink by Valerio Adami in 1980. Beyond the poem's circumstantial nature, the underlined word "tout" already refers back to the reserve of all such circumstances.

The "échancrure" or trace of poetry is also expressed by what

Dupin has called, with regards to Tàpies, "anonymous paraphs": graffiti-like, linguistic, and optic inscriptions attributable to no given signatory or human subject. These paraphs are, rather, a form of inhuman remain transmitted between an anonymous author and an anonymous viewer. Yet, they still reflect a specific historical and political situation. Dupin also reflects on the mutual anonymity of artist and viewer in his essay "Valerio Adami": "In these empty places, anonymous, overpopulated, and underinhabited, these casual places from which one doesn't leave, before these neutral and aggressive objects, the human figure is dismembered, fragmented, without a face" (200).[78] For Dupin, the graffiti-like, paraphic aspect of a line, phrase, or entire poem serves to invert the power of validation and authority traditionally attributed to the paraph. As a composite of paraphs, graffiti, or traces, the poem that emanates from a "savage reserve" remains embedded within social discourse, persistently mimicking the communicative text in order to contest it. As a paraph, as a non-sensical sign or as a "sign of the expectation of meaning," the poem obeys the logic Dupin described in "L'Irréversible" (May 1968): "What is impressive, beyond the analysis of the causes, the circumstances, and the effects of a social phenomenon, is the event's nonsense. Its obscurity that binds us together. Its becoming and its influence that question us, revoke a part of us, confirm a part of us, engage us in an effort of elucidation, interspersed with laughter and violence" (16).[79]

The event's non-sense conditions its existence, as in "Le Soleil substitué," where the event "ne s'écrirait pas sans l'ouverture qu'un coup de folie fore dans l'opacité du réel" [could not be written without the opening that a stroke of madness bores into the opacity of the real] (26). Its non-sense also simultaneously binds the communal "we" and suspends the foundation upon which this community depends. The event through which the possibility of a community emerges thus parallels Laurent Jenny's suggestion that the words of poetry are an event in and through which "effects are produced that are irreductible to the conditions that explain them. . . . The enunciation is an event, precisely in that it is irreducible to a simple *expression* of the subjectivity of the speaker."[80] Though not the expression of a speaking subject, this event may be the designation of an anonymous, alienated collective or community formed around the event's non-sense. From

this perspective, the event's non-sense represents an originary moment where the alienation of individual beings takes on the form and the force of a community of the dispossessed, and poetry becomes a question and a threat posed to a preplanned narrative of events.

Non-sense, like the trace in the works of Tàpies, conditions the event, links it to "us," and acts as the reserve for the communal "we." Dupin seeks to elicit the promise of this non-sensical event in the form of a guttural and vertiginous writing, freed from the shell of carefully crafted aesthetic expressions. As early as *L'Embrasure*, in the poem entitled "Le Raccourci," Dupin wrote:

> Passé le raclement des pelles
> Et l'écume des tombeaux,
> J'écrirai comme elle jaillit,
>
> Vertigineuse, gutturale.
>
> Debout contre ce bois qui se fend,
> Ma table renversée, la porte du toril.
>
> En effet la fraîcheur est tirée (87)
>
> [Beyond the scraping of the shovels
> And the froth of the tombs,
> I will write as it spurts out,
>
> Vertiginous, guttural.
>
> Standing against this splitting wood,
> My overturned table, the bullpen door.
>
> In fact the freshness is drawn]

Poetry surges or spurts from beneath the absolutely articulated and tomblike destinies of History or Being. In the poem "Bleu et sans nom," from *Contumace*, for instance, poetry becomes a voice beside itself, capable of overturning the poet's writing table (here a Leirisian bullpen door) at which the poet begins to chip away, evoking a form of irruptive paraphic inscription:

l'irruption, l'inscription commençante
d'une parole en avant de soi, à l'écart
de nous, vertigineuse, ressassante . . .
. . . . . .
sa voix, l'intonation de sa voix souterraine
charge d'acide, de gravier, de brouillard
les fissures, et la raucité de ta langue,
la lumière, l'inachèvement de ta langue . . .

parole qui revient, sans être venue,
et s'écrit, en avant de nous et de soi, pulvérisant
la trajectoire qui l'occulte (100–2)

[the eruption, the inscription beginning
of words ahead of oneself, away
from us, vertiginous, repetitive . . .
. . . . . .
its voice, the intonation of its subterranean voice
loads with acid, gravel, fog,
the fissures, and the hoarsness of your tongue,
the light, the incompletion of your tongue . . .

words that return, without having come,
and are written, ahead of us and of themselves, pulverizing
the trajectory that overshadows them].[81]

The contumacious voice is not only before or ahead of itself, but also ahead or beyond "us," as historical community. It is "the stranger *par excellence*, called ahead of us,"[82] a voice that delineates the site of paraphic inscriptions similar to Tàpies's "shattered reflections of traditional knowledge," and that pulverizes an overbearing trajectory by means of an incompleted, non-totalized voice that never intersects with the meaning it expresses. Through its incompletion ("inachèvement"), this voice remains linked to "the divided man I am since prehistory." As Dupin remarked regarding Valerio Adami's paintings: "To paint the proximity of things, the world of oppression, also requires that, to reach it, one situate oneself at an extreme distance from oneself, to detach oneself from personal expression, to repudiate confession" (202). The voice of such art is not the confessional testimonial of a preconceived persona, but the distant echo of a divided, pre-historic man, such as is evoked in the title of Dupin's 1989 collection *Chansons troglodytes*.

The first poem from *Chansons troglodytes* is entitled, significantly, "Traille de l'aïeul," and it brings us back to the question of the beginnings of the voice of poetry, and of the written form this voice might take: "écrire est-ce poignarder / la liasse incendier la somme / regarder s'éteindre hors de soi / la saccade de ton sang" [is to write to stab / the bundle of papers to set fire to the sum / to watch the fits and starts of your blood / expire outside of yourself] (13). Writing questions the possibility of knifing or setting fire to a bundle of papers ("la liasse") that is compared to the sum total of one's autobiographical past.[83] It pursues the attempt to destroy the threat of an absolutely sealed autobiography that would constitute the subject as historically necessary and incapable of being (in the past, present, or future) other than what this necessity prescribes. The poem thus seeks to disrupt a presumed personal narrative or "récit" that attempts to simulate the presumed continuity of history, and to contain the subject in a closed, teleological universe. As the last two lines indicate, through their confusion of pronouns ("soi" and "ton"), what the poem attacks is an implicit autobiographical pact, since this pact (between reader and author or between the writer and his ancestral past) also threatens to freeze the possible relations between the self and another by reducing the relation to a "common accord." As opposed to this accord, in the poem "Le Lacet," from *Dehors*, such a "récit" or narrative becomes "un champ frappé / de déshérence" [a field stricken / with escheat] (77), a field deprived of descendants, hence of any certain progenitor which, throughout *Dehors*, implies the poem's "decapitation"—"sa tête décapité sous la hache" [its decapitated head beneath the axe] (63), its loss of any driving force to express the "chief" or the "highest" goal of poetry.[84] "Traille de l'aïeul" also alludes to "Moraines," where writing's ability to evoke the past is rejected: "Si je cesse alors d'être exclu, séparé par quelque rempart transparent, c'est pour bouleverser ce que j'aime, saccager ce qui m'est offert, nouer en fagot les branches mortes pour le feu de ceux-là qui peut-être ne viendront pas. Car l'écriture ne nous rend rien. La consumation même est imparfaite [If I then cease to be excluded, separated by some transparent rampart, it is to over-

whelm what I love, to lay waste to what is offered to me, to tie into a bundle the dead branches for the fire of those who might not come. For writing yields nothing. Even the fire is imperfect] (133). The future horizon in question is not intended for any specific person, but for the possibility that someone might come. If the poet ceases to be excluded it is only to immediately overthrow the newly established community, to sacrifice all that has been offered, including the past poem (dead branches), which would have seemed to have made this end of exclusion possible. The sacrifice is made not for a more perfect, absolute, or totalized communion, but to demonstrate that the destruction remains incomplete or imperfect, to demonstrate that one remains forever excluded or distracted from the communion, and that this distraction is the condition of possibility of communion itself.

In the poem entitled "Deuil," from *Contumace*, the poetic self's return to the community is equally eternally deferred: "comment revenir comment / retraverser la liasse / désécrite entre tes genoux" [how to come back how / to traverse again the bundle / unwritten between your knees] (70). The possibility of return is altered, and becomes the intransitive question of the first verse "comment." The "liasse" or autobiographical past is not simply a bundle to be appropriated and returned to, but is "désécrite entre tes genoux"; not so much not yet written as a form of narrative that has been taken apart by the poem. Rather than a past history, the poet only has access to "le calque du récit" [the calque of the narrative], which a poem from *L'Embrasure* describes as "la frayeur du récit / inarticulé" [the narrative's fright / inarticulate] (170). This inarticulate narrative is born of fear, but also from fraying its way through the past from a subterranean realm over which the poem extends its "trembling dwellings." As Dupin wrote in *Dehors*: "Dessous sont des souterrains / étayés depuis des millénaires / par un tel récit, son battement, / et qu'un rire d'enfant secouru écroule" [Below are subterranean passages / shored up for millennia / by such a narrative, its beat, / and that the laughter of a saved child caves in] (62). "Deuil" also suggests that the past is already (or always remains) unwritten or disarticulated, and that its mourning pronounces an equally unwritten or inarticulate future, what "L'Ordre du jour" called "une errance future" and what "Moraines" calls the text's "murderous illegibility":

> Il y a quelque part, pour un lecteur absent, mais impatiemment attendu, un texte sans signataire, d'où procède nécessairement l'accident de cet autre, ou de celui-ci, dans le calme, dans l'obscénité, dans le dédoublement de la nuit écarlate, silence
>
> trait pour trait superposable à ce qui, du futur sans visage, déborde le texte et dénude sa foisonnante et meurtrière illisibilité. (159)
>
> [There is somewhere an absent reader, but impatiently awaited, a text without a signatory, from which necessarily proceeds the accident of this other, or of this one, in the calm, in the obscenity, in the splitting of the scarlet night, silence
>
> stroke for stroke superimposable on what, of the faceless future, overflows the text and strips bare its burgeoning and murderous illegibility.]

The poem "Fruits de la Passion" from *Chansons troglodytes* also questions the notion of literature or poetry as the presentation of a Ricœurian "uniquely unique" event through a blasphemous send-up of the Crucifixion:

> depuis deux mille ans qu'on les mange
> les couilles du crucifié
> sont des pierres voltaïques
> ou des agates gravées
>
> filandreuses et parcheminées
> comme les fruits pourrissant
> dans le panier de la sainte
> et le caveau de la fée (77–78)
>
> [for two hundred years we've been eating them
> the crucified's balls
> are voltaic stones
> or carved agates
>
> stringy and wrinkled
> like the fruit rotting
> in the saint's basket
> and the fairy's vault].

Two thousand years have passed since the Crucifixion of Christ. To which Dupin added: "Quoiqu'il se tasse sur la croix / j'ai tou-

jours soif et je bois / le vinaigre de ses plaies" [Though he throws himself on the cross / I'm still thirsty and I drink / the vinegar from his wounds] (78). "Fruits de la Passion" suggests that the event of the Crucifixion is hardly exemplary of the uniquely unique, that it did not halt the course of time, nor did it preserve Christ from the putrefaction and mineralization of the finite world: "les couilles du crucifié" have become engraved agates and the fruit are rotting in the basket. Nor did this event quench the poet's thirst for something else:

> quoi qu'il arrive je ne suis
> dans l'odeur du fumier de chèvres
> qu'un survivant qu'assourdissent
> la secousse et le blasphème
> avant la montée de la nuit
>
> ou le simulacre d'un crime
> qui n'en finit pas de bêler (79)
>
> [whatever should happen I am
> through the smell of goat manure
> only a survivor deafened
> by the jolt and the blasphemy
> before the arrival of night
>
> or the simulacra of a crime
> that won't stop bleating].

No matter what happens, regardless of the circumstances and the event, the poet remains an untransfigured survivor for whom the Crucifixion is no more than the "bleating" simulation of a crime. The poet finally dismisses the entire consideration of the importance of the supposedly unique event of the Christ's Crucifixion with the blunt call to change the subject: "si nous passions à autre chose / au poème abracadabrant" [what if we moved on to something else / to the abracadabraing poem] (80). Dupin turns away from the Crucifixion and toward Arthur Rimbaud's poem entitled "Le Cœur du pitre" (1871): "O flots abracadabrantesques, / Prenez mon cœur, qu'il soit sauvé" [O abracadabrantesque waves, / Take my heart, let it be saved],[85] thus evoking a less grandiose and unique attempt to save the heart of

man. "Fruits de la Passion" also suggests moving on to "la ligne où recommencent / un gisement d'images aveugles / et la flûte et la veulerie" [the line where begin again / a deposit of blind images / and the flute and the spinelessness] (82). The poem passes from the mock description of a "uniquely unique" event to the line of the poem where blind images begin ever anew, images as devoid of purpose as those encountered in the works of Louis-René des Forêts; images where the subject loses his willpower and becomes enchanted by a flute. In "Fruits de la Passion" the poetic self is also seemingly saved from death or at least from an overly imposing understanding of death's uniqueness:

> moi l'écriturier vorace
> et le cancre de la couvée
> je serais mort et enterré
> sans la transparence du signe
>
> de ce quatre mars où je sus
> qu'écrire c'est trépasser
>
> et mourir moins que pisser. (81)
>
> [me the voracious writer
> and the dunce of the brood
> I would be dead and buried
> without the transparency of the sign
>
> of this March fourth when I knew
> that to write is to pass away
>
> and to die less than to piss.]

These blind images and transparent signs of the poem again belittle the possibility of a transfiguring sacrifice. Writing becomes the site of "passing away," dying to oneself, but only to begin anew, to "move on," with the realization that to take one's life is about as inconsequential as taking a piss. Neither the event of the Crucifixion nor its simulation in the song of poetry may stop the poem from passing on to something else, to anaphorically propose, for instance: "ça sent le foutre du martyr / ça sent le planétarium" [it smells of the martyr's jism / it smells of the

planetarium], and finally, "ça sent le ranci de la mort" [it smells of death's rancidness"](84).

Dupin's *Chansons troglodytes* pervert the belief in a "uniquely unique" event. They sing an unheard (of) song through which a reader might confront a wholly other future: a faceless or figureless future that rejects any and all totalizing versions of history. The poem "Traille de l'aïeul," for instance, sings (of) the cavernous reserve of troglodyte infancy or the song of a people who cannot speak. In paraphic fashion, this song is forever beside or estranged from words that have grown mute in the face of unnamable historical events. This song of troglodyte infancy already had appeared in *L'Embrasure* as an "arbitrary deflagration" (133), and as a paraphic inscription designating a reserve for what Dupin, in *L'Espace autrement dit*, calls "a silent humanity—reduced to silence—anonymous—deprived of its name, of its tongue—and dispossessed of its powers" (116). In "Traille de l'aïeul," beneath mere physical remains, the poet searches for the persistence or effervescence of a prehistoric "souffle" or insufflation or of a reserve of "fits and starts" in a persistent heart: "plus bas que tes ossements / ma pelle dégagent le souffle / en me traversant tu écris / et nos paraphes emmêlés voyagent" [further down than your bones / my shovel disentangles the breath / in traversing me you write / and our entangled paraphs travel] (17).[86] The reserve of poetry takes the form of enmeshed paraphs or of "brute, lapidary signs" that refer to what Dupin, in *L'Espace autrement dit*, calls an "anonymous scriptor"; brute signs that speak with "an absent or neutral tongue" and that seem to rise from "an errant multitude, cut off—though not without effervescence—from reality and history" (117–18). The enmeshed paraphs of Dupin's poetry refer not only to a singular author and his poetic personae, but also to an anonymous and "innumerable scribe" who signs for a multitude that is not only alienated from its past, but also from the promise of a historical present and future. The paraphic signature underscores this anonymous multitude's insistent state of effervescence, as well as its ability to surge from its tomb of silence and oppression and sign its refractory relationship to the real.

4

André du Bouchet: The Surfaces of Poetry

I myself am only a threshold through which I pass.
—André du Bouchet

"*Muteness in language.* WITH THESE WORDS, THREE YEARS AGO, in the main room of the Tarascon city hall, the deafening fracas of a siren cut through Henri Maldiney's words."[1] André du Bouchet pronounced these words referring to an event in 1992 when Tarascon's noonday air-raid siren interrupted Maldiney with rather uncanny timing.[2] Three years removed from the date and the place of this event, du Bouchet felt the compulsion to set it in words, in *Pourquoi si calmes* (1996). Du Bouchet suggested that Maldiney's words were "cut through" ("coupé") by what should have been the alarming sound of an air-raid siren. To the reader of the preceding chapters, the reasons for dwelling on André du Bouchet's seemingly anecdotal lines will be clear. In expressing the importance of the place and the date of an event, do not these lines express the event's singularity and uniqueness? Yes and no. For du Bouchet, what makes this event stand out is its resistance to being unique. The supposedly singular event of the air-raid siren that reduced Maldiney to silence at the moment he uttered the words "muteness in language" in fact signaled the suspension of the event defined as the "uniquely unique." What makes the coincidence so singular, rather than unique, is that when the siren ceased sounding, Maldiney did not directly pursue his conference, but asked in a strangely out of place present tense: "Do you hear the siren?" (23). His answer to his own question was to allude to the sirens' song in Book XII of Homer's *Odyssey* and to Ulysses' slaughter of Penelope's suitors: "why so calm [pourquoi si calmes] to the point of indifference, when, in other times this noise would have torn through your heart like the piercing sound

of Ulysses' bow tore through the suitors' hearts" (24). Strangely, Maldiney overshoots the time and the place of the events to which Tarascon's siren referred, the air-raid warnings of World War II. He goes further back in time or out of time to the *Odyssey*'s mythological time.

For Maldiney, the lack of impact of the sound of the siren lay in its no longer representing an event: "it is not a real event, an event, strictly defined, conjugates in itself the characteristics of suddenness and of something happening for the first time" (24). The event ought to be unique, and the siren's failure as event lies in its postwar noonday reiteration: "It takes its place as a representation, but does not strike you in your presence" (24). Yet, in *Pourquoi si calmes*, André du Bouchet takes issue with Maldiney's definition of an event:

> mais—atteint dans sa parole, celui qui parle l'aura été au vif, et de même, la plupart, dans un fracas les rappelant au muet, ses auditeurs déconcertés par le déchaînement de la sirène municipale.
> ce qui, dans la ponctualité d'un non-événement, appartenait à la répétition, n'en a pas moins frappé pour la première fois. (24)
>
> [but—struck in his words, the one who speaks was sharply, and also, most, in a roar recalling them to the mute, his audience disconcerted by the fury of the municipal siren.
> what, in the punctuality of a nonevent, belonged to repetition, struck nonetheless for the first time.]

For du Bouchet, the siren's singularity as event is in fact bound to its repeatability or reiterability. It is only in hearing this disconcerting fracas, by noticing it, that we can allow it to prefigure other words: "le vacarme sera converti, s'il est *entendu*, en un signe précurseur de la parole, qui anticipe et traverse—avivé ou réparé déjà—le champ de la rupture" [the racket will be converted, if it is *heard*, into a sign, precursor of words, that anticipates and traverses—aroused and repaired already—the field of the rupture] (26). As du Bouchet also wrote, "de la parole, naît une parole—d'une rupture de la parole" [from words, words are born—from a rupture of words] (27). The uncanny event that opens *Pourquoi si calmes* will help us better consider du Bouchet's understanding of poetry's relation to (and creation of) events that occur in what he calls "le temps intercalaire—le temps de l'entre temps" [intercalary time—the time of the meantime] (12).[3]

Fifty years before Maldiney was interrupted, in 1942, André du Bouchet opened up a book of Friedrich Hölderlin's poems translated from the German into English, and including Hölderlin's late, perhaps apocryphal poem entitled "In lieblicher Bläue." In 1970, in Stuttgart during a conference entitled ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," celebrating the two-hundredth anniversary of Hölderlin's birth, du Bouchet readily admitted that "In lieblicher Bläue" had been one of the initial forceful influences on his own writing.[4] The edition in which du Bouchet read this poem is Michael Hamburger's 1942 translation of Hölderlin, which du Bouchet discovered while living in the United States during World War II, following his family's flight from France during the German invasion and defeat of France in May–June 1940. The pages that follow develop an understanding of the event in poetry that lies somewhere between Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue" and du Bouchet's *Pourquoi si calmes*; an understanding of poetry and event that finds its echo in the works of du Bouchet's fellow poets of *L'Ephémère*.

In 1983, André du Bouchet recalled the beginning of World War II as a time when his family "took refuge on the roads." His early writings were marked by the violent awareness that the world he had "hardly begun to discover had been destroyed." Du Bouchet added that he began writing during the war "to reestablish something, to account for a relation that, even before I could really notice it—I was barely fifteen years old—was swept away."[5] He thus attempted to express the simultaneous appearance and disappearance of his relation to the world, in what he described, in *Pourquoi si calmes* (1996), as "the time of the *debacle* that swept away all anchoring points [points d'ancrage]" (33).

In 1956, eight years following his return to France, André du Bouchet published his translation into French of "In lieblicher Bläue" (see appendix B). This poem, as we shall see, is central to du Bouchet's poetry. It is also key to Martin Heidegger's postwar reflections on poetry in such essays as ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . ." and "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry." For Heidegger, Hölderlin's poem represents the grace and innocence of a man descending from a church bell tower; a man who is suddenly silhouetted in the frame of a window against a sky-blue back-

ground. Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue" also suggested to Heidegger that "as long as the arrival of kindness endures, so long does man succeed in measuring himself not unhappily against the godhead. When this measuring appropriately comes to light, man creates poetry from the very nature of the poetic."[6] The distance or measure implied by this lovely or adorable blue sky does not solely reveal a human figure, for Heidegger it also reveals the condition of possibility of "figuring" the human. Through the poem's "adorable blue," man can lift his head from the toil of the day, and measure his grace and his distance to and from "the godhead" [die Gottheit]. Thus, rather than images as mere "copies and imitations," poetry produces a "genuine image" that, again for Heidegger, "lets the invisible be seen and so imagines the invisible in something alien to it. Because poetry takes that mysterious measure, to wit, in the face of the sky, therefore it speaks in 'images' . . . that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar."[7] The little we have already glimpsed of *Pourquoi si calmes* suggests that du Bouchet's poetry is far removed from Heidegger's ontologizing readings of Hölderlin's poetry, and far from Heidegger's claim that the products of the imagination are "visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar." In this sense, du Bouchet's poetry is similarly distant from Paul Ricœur's conception of fiction's relationship to *tremendum horrendum*, to "imaginative dread," and to the "uniquely unique": all notions that parallel Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin.[8] As we shall see, du Bouchet's poetry is closer to Jacques Dupin's criticism of the notion of poetry as the expression of the uniquely unique.

It is worth considering for a moment the implications of the terms 'uniquely unique' and 'genuine image,' as they relate to Hölderlin's poetry, and to the poets of *L'Ephémère*. In *L'Idole et la distance* (1977), for instance, Jean-Luc Marion relates the word "Gestalt," in Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue," to a figure or form that evokes the "image's sacred simplicity." He further proposes that poetry's "divine terror" exceeds the power of the sacred, since it founds and reveals the sacred's innermost depths: "Whoever reads the poem's opening, without experiencing it to one's inmost depths should pursue no further."[9] From this Dantesque perspective, poetry voices "the surge of the invisible into visibility."[10] Marion's Heideggerian understanding of poetry as

the site of the apparition of the invisible into the visible is similar to Yves Bonnefoy's early desire for a poetry capable of saying death, and able to present death's invisible immediacy as the condition of possibility of the mind and of mediation. Just as Bonnefoy's early efforts sought to create a poetry whose images would not simply describe or represent death, but present it in the poem, so too do Heidegger, Ricœur, and Marion predicate poetry on the sacred function of poetic images. Within such a revelatory structure, man's grace is predicated on the ability to extend one's gaze through the depths of "lovely blueness" separating earth and sky. It also suggests that the poet can reveal to man his sublime ability to intuit (if not comprehend) the fathomless depths of the sacred. Thus, for Heidegger, this intuition or "upward glance" "passes aloft toward the sky, and yet it remains below on the earth. The upward glance spans the between of sky and earth."[11]

Heidegger's spanning vision between sky and earth is closer to the romantic topos of a bridge—such as in Victor Hugo's "Le Pont" (1852)—spanning the metaphysical distance between the infinite and the finite, than to du Bouchet's notion, in *Pourquoi si calmes*, of an end of relations and the destruction of all "points d'ancrage" [anchoring points] (33). Du Bouchet's poetry has been linked, nevertheless, to Heidegger's ontologizing revelatory structure, and to a rather rapid and ill-demonstrated Heideggerian legacy. To complicate matters further, André du Bouchet's supposed Heideggerianism depends on uncritically accepting Jean-Pierre Richard's characterization, in the early 1960s, of poetry's "gift of unveiling" ["don de dévoilement"]. For Richard, du Bouchet's poems "*signify* and *express* the essential contradiction, forcing us to live it as it shatters through the flaws in the very meaning that indicates this contradiction" and, as in Marion's catholicizing presentation of images whose irruption in the poem signify the sacred, Richard's reading also suggests that "in the signifier, as in the signified, poetic truth irrupts as the perpetual gift to be able to *destroy itself*."[12] Du Bouchet's poetry does seek to destroy its own form—to "traverse representation"—not, however, for the sake of revealing poetry's sacred "gift of unveiling."

When read from the perspective of Richard and Heidegger, André du Bouchet's poetry also has been portrayed as incapable

of dialectically incorporating history's materiality and of telling the story proper. It is charged with ignoring "history and criticism, in order to remain at the level of a unique representation."[13] Such a reading participates in a more general debate regarding the Heideggerian legacy in postwar French poetry. André du Bouchet's involvement in the debate over Heidegger's French legacy centers on his conference ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," pronounced in Stuttgart on 21 March 1970, as well as on the conference "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986," in which du Bouchet's reading of poetry is said to eternalize Hölderlin "in innocence, Heidegger in the intangible influence of his thought, and Celan in a monochord angelism."[14] Yet, to restrict the impact of the writings of Hölderlin, Heidegger, and Celan to the stakes of poetry's "historicity," and to say that du Bouchet's poetry fails to recognize these stakes is to say too much and too little. As in the case of the other poets of *L'Ephémère*, a closer consideration of du Bouchet's early writings reveals the influence of a poetic tradition that is far broader than a narrow polemical context or debate.[15] As with the meaning of the word "event," we also need to reconsider the word "history" as it relates to the poets of *L'Ephémère*.

In 1949, the year following his return to France from the United States, André du Bouchet reflected his obsession with the simultaneous discovery and loss of a relation in his first poems, written in the United States between 1946 and 1948 and published in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps modernes* in 1949.[16] In this same year, and in the same journal, du Bouchet published "Fureur et mystère," a review of René Char's eponymous 1947 collection of poems. Though he had yet to make the acquaintance of Jacques Dupin and Yves Bonnefoy, du Bouchet expressed, in his reading of Char, concerns close to those of Dupin in "Comment dire?" and to those of Bonnefoy's writings from the same period. In *L'Improbable*, for instance, Bonnefoy suggested that Baudelaire had inserted the risk of death into poetry (41). For the young du Bouchet, it was René Char who broke with "a traditional attitude toward death" in order to "reintroduce death into life's course."[17] In "Fureur et mystère," André du Bouchet proclaimed that nineteenth-century poetry's fascination with death had remained both insincere and incomplete. The poets of the past century "hesitated interminably" between "a move toward

revolt in the dark and the transportations of a devalued optimism" (745). Du Bouchet thus unmistakably rejected French romanticism's necrophilic penchant, and, as had Dupin, he took André Breton (in the name of surrealism) to task for his outdated understanding of the role of death in poetry, describing Breton as "one of the last survivors from one of our false glories" (746). He was thus also referring to the false glory of surrealism's interwar period and to its "chantage à la mort" [threatening death], from which surrealist poetry "extracted its bawdiest accents" (746).[18]

For André du Bouchet, René Char's poetry represented an antidote to poetry's fearful and puerile fascination with death. It refused to resign itself to the fate of falling prey to a surrealist mythology that was projected into the past as an "impotent nostalgia" (745), and into a "formless future peopled with monstrous visions and inevitably experienced in a present that one could no longer gauge because the mind was too busy deporting the battle into inaccessible regions" (745). As did Yves Bonnefoy and Jacques Dupin, André du Bouchet criticized a prewar poetic tradition that reduced both the present and the future to a monstrous mythology. More directly, du Bouchet suggested that Char's poetry spurned an aging surrealism whose "cauchemar jouait sur du velours" [nightmare was played out on velvet] (745)—a not-so-veiled reference to the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), in which André Breton suggested that, "incapable of failure, [the poet] will play on the velvet of all failures."[19] For du Bouchet, the games of surrealism were harmless and incapable of being brought to bear on postwar France, and it was Char's poetry that most effectively countered surrealism's "*fateful* verbal construction," which was little more than "the parody of nothingness" (746–47). As with Bonnefoy's criticism of surrealism's reduction of poetry to nothingness, du Bouchet also sensed that surrealism's "sumptuous means were only a shortcut toward a vacuum," and an attempt "to dishonor man by devalorizing his syntax" (747).[20]

In 1962, Bonnefoy recognized the impact of André du Bouchet's thought on postwar French poetry, and suggested that his poetry is marked by an "intolerant subjectivity" that rejects the surrealist "parody of nothingness."[21] For Bonnefoy, du Bouchet's poetry sought to destroy a reified subject that had been overly determined by the past. What Bonnefoy calls the "intoler-

ant *I*" in du Bouchet's poetry seeks "to awaken, and to establish a deeper sense of time" since "our affective powers and our thought are so heavily marked by past events, which are so fearsomely established as givens and almost as things."[22] In du Bouchet's collection of poems entitled *Air* (1950), for instance, the poetic subject is indeed intolerant, desiring an eternally other world: "elle même, c'est / la réalité—éternellement autre, et qui ne ressemble à rien, que nous désirons" [in itself, it is / reality—eternally other, and that resembles nothing else, that we desire].[23] As such, the poem unveils neither Heidegger's nor Ricœur's "frightful" inmost depths of a unique, sacred, and seamless world. Rather, it apprehends a world that exists beyond traditional representations; a world that is both materially and spiritually desirable. Though Bonnefoy's is certainly a striking reading of André du Bouchet's early poetry, it errs in much the same way as does his reading of des Forêts, in that he insists on the "truer," "profounder," and "deeper" sense of poetry, thus overlooking the crucial role du Bouchet ascribes to the surface, the plane, even the banality of poetry.

André du Bouchet's rejection of the sacred depths of poetry is equally apparent in his 1956 translation of Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue." By translating the German "umschweben" as "planer"—thus by translating the phrase "umschwebet Geschrei von Schwalben" as "*plane* un cri d'hirondelles" [there hovers swallows' cry]—du Bouchet's use of the word "plane" also alludes to the French poet Pierre Reverdy's inclusion of platitude and of banality within poetic imagination. Five years prior to his translation of "In lieblicher Bläue," in his homage entitled "Envergure de Reverdy" (1951), du Bouchet dissociated Reverdy's poetic image from what he called its "surrealist appropriation."[24] Reverdy produces images not simply "to please, surprise, or disorient, as was the case with the decorative or surrealist image." Rather, Reverdy's images embrace their own banality and platitude, and serve as what du Bouchet names "measuring stakes" [jalons] that build "a ramp in the disorder that is so overwhelming that we feel the urgent need to regain possession of oneself" [se ressaisir] (315). Reverdy's poetic images neither radically reorder the world nor seek to provoke surrealism's disorienting "crise de conscience,"[25] but to "to bring it back within our human, unheard of [inouï] world that exceeds man in every direction" (315). These images follow the circuitous path of attempting to imagine the world through a form of catachrestic imagination that, rather than attempting to ruin the world, underscores man's propensity to imagine his surroundings. As du Bouchet wrote: "since he could not know nature, man *imagined* it" (316), which did not imply, for du Bouchet, that one was obliged to believe in the products of the imagination.[26]

Several years following his early essays on Reverdy and Char, André du Bouchet's collection *Sans couvercle* (1953) renounced the lyricism of poetry and embraced the earth's arbitrary finitude. In the poem "Métal," for instance, du Bouchet evoked a metallic atmosphere that is reminiscent of the fusion of the church tower bells ("das Blech") and of the adorable blue sky of Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue":

Cette liberté que j'affronte pour rire
le goût métallique de l'air
rien ne m'astreint à cette dictée
je m'applique
seul
à la terre
ce que je dis est dehors
comme une canne
comme du fer
comme un homme dans un champ
et sonne
faux [27]

[This freedom I jokingly face
the metallic taste of the air
nothing compels me to this dictation
I apply myself
alone
to the ground
what I say is outside
like a cane
like iron
like a man in a field
and sounds
out of tune].

The subject's freedom lies in the arbitrariness of his situation, in which he can anaphorically evoke the likeness of things

("comme"), but not their absolute identity. Three years following "Métal," the first poem from du Bouchet's collection *Moteur blanc* (1956) evokes a similarly nonfateful freedom:

> J'ai vite enlevé
> cette espèce de pansement arbitraire
> je me suis retrouvé
> libre
> et sans espoir[28]
>
> [I quickly removed
> This kind of arbitrary bandage
> I found myself
> free
> and without hope].

Both *Sans couvercle* and *Moteur blanc* suggest that the poet rejects the "arbitrary bandage" of stable versification throughout poems that "sound / out of tune" (as with the abrupt anaphora of "comme"). The poem frees itself from the hopes embodied in more stable versification. The early poem "Ce que la lampe a brulé" (1954) questions, for instance, whether poetry really ought to be the formal condition of possibility of a new community: "Je jette mes poèmes au feu. Il n'en reste que ce que je déteste" [I throw my poems in the fire. What is left is only what I detest].[29] The poem has become execrable and du Bouchet rejects its past tradition and the hopes embodied therein. In "Envergure de Reverdy," du Bouchet again demonstrated his desire to reject the fetishized image and to downplay the claim for the image's sacred function by quoting from Reverdy's *Le Gant de crin*: "the image that is blown out of proportion is appalling" (315). Du Bouchet thus also confirmed his aversion to Heidegger's notion of poetic images as the "visible inclusions of the alien."[30]

Du Bouchet's early writings, such as the prose poem "Image à terme" (1954), were already clearly skeptical of poetry's supposed founding and sacred function. "Image à terme," published in highly modified form in *Dans la chaleur vacante*, characterizes the evidence of poetry as "banal." Rather than belonging to one individual or to a sacred few, this evidence is "à ce point banale que chacun de plein droit se l'approprie" [so banal that everyone

rightly appropriates it] (111). In *L'Incohérence*, du Bouchet attacks the poem's images (and the power that produces them), and seeks to annul "les images, au fur et à mesure qu'elles surgissent,—les casser" [the images, as they arise,—to break them] (np). Rather than images that stand out as literary gems, "Image à terme" proposes a "rerouted image" [image déroutée] (111), and images that, as du Bouchet wrote in "Envergure de Reverdy," "go unnoticed" or that remain "invisible, since they are not set" like precious stones in the gangue of the text (314).[31]

The poem's syntax, however, does remain subject to the time of the image's creation or "advent" [avénement]: "syntax, carried by images, remains entirely subjected to their advent [avénement]" (314). In "Image à terme," what du Bouchet had called the "evidence" of poetry is also described, as an image that almost seems "décolorée par la rapidité avec laquelle elle s'éloigne de la circonstance qui lui avait conféré semblant de justification" [discolored by the speed with which it moves away from the circumstance that gave it the appearance of justification] (112). The poem's evidence does not come from the image's intersection with its supposed pretextual events, but from actively distancing itself from these events. The image distances itself from its supposed ontological source to such an extent that it appears "free from any past" [nette de passé]. The poem, in turn, appears "au-devant de soi comme non-avenue, son point d'origine ne se laissant localiser que dans l'instant, et dans un instant qui la déssaisit, coup après coup, des significations auxquelles on peut l'avoir assujettie" [ahead of us as though it had not happened, its point of origin situatable only in the instant, and in an instant that removes it, time after time, from the meanings to which one may have submitted it] (112). The poem is not the direct consequence of an anterior event, but the overwhelmed product of images that tear themselves away from the event and that disavow the specific meanings attributed to them. Thus, as with the role of images in Louis-René des Forêts's writings, what has come to pass—"l'advenue"—is not necessarily dissociable from what has not—"le non-advenue." As du Bouchet suggested in 1983, the image rejects a unique poetic form that would pretend to be adequate to "representing" a given real event: "today the poetic is no longer what passes through an identifiable form."[32] Reality

ruins stable poetic form to which events can no longer be assimilated.

In *L'Incohérence* (1979), André du Bouchet returned to characterizing poetry's rejection of its own overly limiting definition: "Poésie. Déjà, ce n'est plus d'elle qu'il s'agit. Sa force est dehors, dans la plénitude qui l'entame. Et dans cet instant où, la parole en place, de nouveau elle se révèle en défaut" [Poetry. Already, it is no longer about it. Its force is outside, in the plenitude that cuts into it. And in this instance when, words in place, again it is revealed to be at fault].[33] Whereas Paul Celan had suggested in "Le Méridien" that poetry followed the "impossible path of the Impossible," for du Bouchet poetry is "une parole de rupture" that does not give a final form to exterior reality, and that always turns up missing at the moment when this reality would appear. Poetry's search for an adequate form is unending, and demonstrates that "il n'y a pas de terme, ou que le terme atteint se traverse" [there is no term or that the term that is reached is traversed] (16). Poetry thus also traverses and ruins monological, theological, and cultic representations of the world, disavowing representations that might appear to give a stable form or meaning to life, but that are not the end goal of life. Du Bouchet recognizes that our existence "depends on a world of representations," yet they "are not the object of our life, the goal we assign to ourselves: representation has to be traversed ceaselessly."[34] As in "Image à terme," and throughout its ceaseless traversal, poetry seeks to destroy poetic form and to denounce representations that are bound to any unique form. As such, poetry neither represents or performatively presents past events, but presents the event as "non-advenue" in an empty or vacant space.

In his essay entitled "Baudelaire irrémédiable" (1956), André du Bouchet spelled out the implications of a poetry that perpetually rejects the space in which it might take place. For du Bouchet, Baudelaire's "irremediable" represents a "flaw" or a "vacant space at the heart of the poem" that serves to criticize the "imaginary" in poetry.[35] As do the other poets of *L'Ephémère*, du Bouchet finds fault with imagination's tendency to aspire to the eternal and to repress man's finite being: "the imagination seems to want to preserve the essential, to remove it from the action of the time in which it affirmed itself—to eternalize" (3). Whereas Yves Bonnefoy had criticized poetry's tendency to abstract the represented event from its temporal origin, du Bouchet focused on Baudelaire's attempt to criticize poetic abstraction and to write a poetry that, rather than evacuating finitude, incorporates and embraces it. Specifically, du Bouchet considers the relationship of poetry to finitude and death through a reading of the following verses from Baudelaire's poem "Le Gouffre": "Sur le fond de mes nuits Dieu de son doigt savant / Dessine un cauchemar multiforme et sans trêve" [On the background of my nights God with his knowing finger / Draws a multiform and unending nightmare] (142). For du Bouchet, terror surfaces from and on the two-dimensional ground ("fond") of the poet's dreams. The apparent abyss of death thus becomes little more than a disappointing theatrical scene. For du Bouchet, Baudelaire's "Le Rêve d'un curieux" also demonstrates that, at the appointed hour of one's death, one can only be disappointed: "J'étais mort sans surprise, et la terrible aurore / M'enveloppait.—Et quoi! n'est-ce donc que cela? / La toile était levée et j'attendais toujours" [I died without any surprises, and the terrible dawn / Enveloped me.—What! Is that all it is? / The curtain was up, and I was waiting still] (128–29). As with Maurice Blanchot's study of the inauthenticity of "poetic death" in Baudelaire's "Squelette laboureur," for du Bouchet "Le Rêve d'un curieux" suggests that the poem can only disappoint the poet's expectation that death will reveal all. It can only disappoint the expectation that death be the revelation of our authentic, uniquely unique, presence or *Dasein*, an expectation, as du Bouchet suggested in "Baudelaire irrémédiable," to which "the poem in no way responds" (13). For du Bouchet, Baudelaire's poetry expresses the opposite of the hope that death might be an absolute revelation: "The poem is thus nothing—nothing but this expectation [rien que cette attente]. But to await something is to be alive: this nothing thus engages us entirely" (13). Poetry thus rejects both a "divinely terrible event" and Sartrian engagement. It engages itself in waiting, in inaction, and in deferring the accomplishment of any end whatsoever. Poetry's success lies in its failure or refusal to act or to "come to terms." As du Bouchet aptly points out, the chasm ("gouffre") does not refer to Baudelaire's vertigo before a void within his own existence, as Sartre proposed in *Baudelaire* (1947), but to a new, perhaps two-dimensional, ground ("fond"). The emptiness or chasm—"le vide, le gouffre" (13)—is the "dé-

faut" that the poem exposes as a "new form taken by our sudden consciousness of our life" (13–14).

In his reading of Baudelaire's prose poem "Laquelle est la vraie?" (372), du Bouchet proposed that it evokes a form of imagination that is able to express an unimaginable reality, one that does not abolish the poem, but perpetually renews it: a form of imagination which, in "Baudelaire irrémédiable," he also called the "interruption of the imaginary within the imaginary," producing "a moment of unimaginable reality that has become perceivable through this sort of breach [faille] that is occasionally opened up at the heart of his narrative [récit]" (12). A certain breach in poetic imagination allows Baudelaire to illustrate another experience of poetry through which a finite and arbitrary moment is apprehended as a rupture in the poem's illusory eternity and reveals that our own life "is susceptible of being interrupted from one moment to another" (12).[36] The poem does not present the finite moment in itself as a unique, nonrepeatable event, but as an abyss, a rupture, a breach, or a flaw in poetic imagination that supports us or becomes what, in 1956, du Bouchet called "ce calme dont on n'ose dire si il est imaginaire ou non" [this calm of which we neither dare say that it is imaginary or not].[37] With reference to *Pourquoi si calmes* (1996), this "calm" is also terrifying. It is simultaneously silence ("mutisme") and "fracas." The calm announces the interruption of the imaginary from within the imaginary, whereby the distinction between the imaginary and the real vanishes. Du Bouchet turned to Baudelaire's poem "Le Voyage," in the section of *Les Fleurs du mal* entitled "La Mort," to suggest that the force of this poetry is a reef upon which the narratives of imagination are wrecked: "L'imagination qui dresse son orgie / Ne trouve qu'un récif aux claretés du matin" [Raising its orgy, imagination / Finds only a reef in the morning light] (123). Poetry reveals that imagination yields only "an oasis of horror and a desert of ennui" (126). By destroying this false oasis Baudelaire's poetry returns to what du Bouchet, in "Baudelaire irrémédiable," calls "a real present that is simultaneously the dénouement of his death, life reduced to the essential, and the source of the poem" (16). As with the force of Reverdy's poetic images, and as with the subversive force of images in the works of the poets of *L'Ephémère*, Baudelaire's poetry ruins the phantasmal power of the image.

For du Bouchet, poetry thus both questions its imaginative function and evokes another "essential" and unimaginable reality that "cannot be *represented*, but from our inability to imagine it we draw a positive force" (17). Poetry celebrates the unimaginable, since it spells poetry's continued existence.

In 1956, André du Bouchet and Jacques Dupin published the initially anonymous poetic manifesto entitled "A qui sinon à toi?" in an issue of the *Cahiers GLM* that featured a brief essay by Maurice Blanchot entitled "Le Poète," along with manifesto-like poems by Yves Bonnefoy, Jacques Dupin, and André du Bouchet. In "A qui sinon à toi?" Du Bouchet and Dupin rejected the belief in a "Golden Age of poetry" that might exist in the past or in the future. Nor did they believe that poetry "opens onto silence, devoid of or filled with meaning."[38] What Bonnefoy had called "intolerant subjectivity" becomes, in "A qui sinon à toi?" a poem that turns against the poet, and signifies refusal of everything, even if at the price of its own disappearance. The poem becomes the "enemy of the poet's lips, aged, but through ingratitude and through another destiny."[39] Du Bouchet and Dupin suggested that it is only by risking its own destruction that the poem can undermine its own tendency to represent the universal rather than to present the particular; only so can it follow this other destiny.

Six years following "Image à terme" and "A qui sinon à toi?" du Bouchet published *Dans la chaleur vacante* (1961), whose poems point to an absence or distance that forever defers an overarching authority: "Il y a une main / tendue / dans l'air / tu la regardes / comme si tu la tenais de moi / partout nos traits / éclatent" [There is a hand / outstretched / in the air / you look at it / as if you had it from me / everywhere our features / burst] (23–24). Beyond the presentation of an outstretched hand, this poem also projects both the poetic and the reading self into the interval or reserve of community. "You" might seem to join "I" ("comme si tu la tenais de moi"), but only at the point where the traits of the implied communal "we" come apart. The "traits" that would give form to the community of the "we" explode ("éclatent"), and the outstretched or tendered hand points to the neverending nature of the community entailed by a handclasp ("pas encore"). As du Bouchet warned in *Air*, it is at the very moment of clasping and of establishing the warmth ("chaleur") of community that

this communion is shattered and emptied ("vacante"): "pour avoir / trop / voulu saisir, je me retrouve entier / dans le creux de la main" [for having / too much / wanted to grasp, I find myself entirely / in the hollow of the hand] (66–67). A word is uttered or proffered—the word "air" for instance—not for the sake of absolutely mediating or conceptualizing the exterior world, but of maintaining a distance between the word and the world, of maintaining poetry's injunction: "pas encore." As Jacques Depreux noted in *André du Bouchet; ou, La Parole traversée* (1988), "the place of the 'chaleur' is that of the 'pas encore' [not yet], and the '*chaleur vacante*' presents itself as a place that is momentarily without a master."[40] In attempting to absolutely comprehend its object, thus in attempting to deny poetry's deferral of the absolute, the subject can only fall into the "hollow of the hand" [creux de la main], as into the void or reserve of its own mediation.

In 1968, in his text "Sous les pavés, la plage [Notes du mai 1968]," reprinted in *L'Incohérence*, du Bouchet again expressed writing's ceaselessly deferred aspiration.[41] The poem becomes "[la] paroi de la parole inscrite" [the wall of inscribed words], thus signaling the traces left on the walls of Paris during the events of May 1968: events that, for du Bouchet, equally figured "un refus sur / lequel aura porté, pour qui écrit, une raison d'être (raison d'écrire—à l'écart) partagé soudain" [a refusal on / which will have come to bear, for whom writes, a reason for being (reason for writing—at a distance) suddenly shared] (np). May 1968 represented a refusal and a rupture in writing already anticipated in "A qui sinon à toi?" (1956). May 1968 represented a time when the poet ceased to write as a poet, in order to produce the sort of writing that leaves a space for emptiness or for what Jacques Dupin, in *Contumace*, called a "vacancy" in political events (34). For his part, in "Sous les pavés, la plage [Notes du mai 1968]," du Bouchet wrote: "Cesser d'écrire, un temps, et réserver l'emplacement de ce vide—de l'écart (pour ne pas entraver le vent) dans la mise en question qui ces jours-ci tranche. Que la place d'un écrivain soit marquée par le vide (instant où il a cessé d'écrire . . .)" [To cease writing, for a time, and to reserve the place of this emptiness—of the distance (to not hinder the wind) in the questioning that these days is conclusive. That the place of a writer be marked by emptiness (instant in which he has ceased to write . . .)] (np). Whereas in *Dans la chaleur vacante* the notion

of vacancy was critical of poetic images and imagination, "Sous les pavés, la plage" politicizes this criticism, yet in terms of poetry's simultaneous critique of its own form and of its ideological turn. As Dupin wrote, again in *Contumace*, "tout agencement de mots est politique, / est vacant" [any arrangement of words is political, / is vacant] (34).

What du Bouchet had described earlier as a flaw in words became, in "Sous les pavés, la plage," a breach that is occupied by no figure nor any writer: "Que demeure vacante, dans le nouveau déplacement commun, la place de qui, à nouveau, doit écrire" [Let it remain vacant, in the new shared displacement, the place of the one who must, again, write] (np). Poetry's refusal is merged with a more general and intransitive refusal to signify anything. The poet's words merge with the event(s) of May 1968 to the extent that he adheres to words that are not his own, to the extent that the words are not those of a poet: "paroles qui ne proviennent pas de lui: "Enfin, de l'air . . ." / Parole d'autrui qu'il peut—un temps—faire sienne . . . / Cesser, / aussitôt, d'écrire" [words that do not come from him: "Finally, some air . . ." / Another's words which he can—for a time—make his own . . . / To cease, / straightaway, to write] (np). The words of another are, for instance, those of the Russian author Boris Pasternak's "Haute maladie," which du Bouchet translated in 1954, and which he cites in "Sous les pavés, la plage": "*Lorsque la place du poète cesse d'être vide, danger!*" [*When the place of the poet ceases to be empty, danger!*]. The first sentence from "Haute maladie" also bears witness to Pasternak's and to du Bouchet's reflections on the historical horizon of poetry: "J'ai honte, plus chaque jour, qu'à une époque que traversent de telles ombres, une certaine haute maladie puisse encore être nommée poésie" [I am ashamed, every day more, that in a time traversed by such shadows, a certain ancient illness can still be called poetry] (np). Pasternak's writing, as Baudelaire's, reached what du Bouchet, in his essay "Le Second Silence de Boris Pasternak" (1959), called an "*other* and improbable dimension, where the poet is no longer called a poet, and where poetry has ceased, as is fitting, to be named poetry."[42] Pasternak succeeded in inserting an "unimaginable reality," his own finite reality, into the written corpus. He succeeded in "inserting, at the heart of his work, a body that is irreducible to poetry, and that is the work of his life."[43] Thus, du

Bouchet warned against such absolute forms or figures of the poet as what, in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," is called a Hölderlinian "celebrant," and against poetry as an ascendancy or a calling ("office") (169).

Just as in 1974 Jacques Dupin had spoken of the poet's necessary effacement before the written poem,[44] so too did du Bouchet present the poet as being absent from the words that he utters. Specifically, in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," the poem is depicted as being always at odds with what the poet means to say. The poet, as an eccentric or decentralized subject, proffers "une parole de rupture . . . qui quelquefois éclaire lorsqu'elle se désiste de son *vouloir dire*" [words of rupture . . . that sometimes clarify when they desist from their *will-to-meaning*] (167). The poet's *desistance* from what he means to say ("son vouloir dire") recalls Hegel's proposition that "language is the more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say."[45] Through language *we* refute what *we* mean to say. The desistance of the poet's language thus turns the self against the self or the present self against the past self, the synthesis of which would seek to produce the meaning that would found the community of the first person plural "we." This refutation is also Baudelaire's "flaw," which opens up a chasm or breach in our will-to-meaning, thereby opening onto an unfinished, unfinishable, narrative of human experience. For Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, the poetic subject's exorbitant desistance from a "vouloir dire" is exemplary of what he calls the poem's "pure will-to-meaning," which is the "pure will-to-mean nothing, the nothingness, against which and through which there is presence, what is."[46] In terms of Baudelaire, the poem's pure will-to-meaning is its will to say the "nothing" of resemblance, to say the nothing by which reality is, as du Bouchet wrote in *Air*, "éternellement autre, et qui ne ressemble à rien, que nous désirons" [eternally other, and that resembles nothing, that we desire] (23).

Poetry is thus the will to *say* or to express the nothing, not the will to realize it in its immediate nothingness. Poetry expresses the nothing as the "rien" of waiting and deferral: "pas encore." It expresses the chasm or what both joins and separates the self and the self. This chasm is also nothing ("rien"), yet, as du Bouchet wrote in "Baudelaire irrémédiable," it "engages us entirely" (13) in "poetic *existence*," defined as a moment that

"pierces through life and tears it, at times, leaving us beside ourselves" [hors de nous].[47] Such a "vouloir-dire le rien" also subjugates the written word to the spoken for the sake of a deviation or detour in the written word that throws us off the track of its will-to-totality. As du Bouchet wrote in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," this form of poetry brings the "written word back to the proffered—the inscribed word in its will to eternity is brought back to subversion, to the insolence of a breath that proffers . . . and vanishes" (167).[48] Thus the poem, as "parole de rupture," refutes what we mean to have it say (our "vouloir-dire"), and this refutation broadens the context of our reading of du Bouchet's poetry, his conferences, and his translation of Hölderlin's poem "In lieblicher Bläue."

A simple, striking example will suffice to demonstrate the extent to which André du Bouchet's writings are distinct from Heideggerian sacralizations both of the other and of poetry's "dire." It will also serve to distinguish these writings from subsequent readings of du Bouchet's supposed Heideggerianism. The example is du Bouchet's use of the French word "corps" [body] to translate the German word "Gestalt" from Hölderlin's poem "In lieblicher Bläue," rather than following the initiative of Michael Hamburger's seemingly more literal English translation of "Gestalt" as "figure" in the verses "when the figure is so detached, man's / Plasticity is brought out."[49] In ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," du Bouchet also presented the span of adorable blue from "In lieblicher Bläue" in quite a different light, strikingly dissociating himself from Heidegger's notion of spanning distance ("Entfernung"). Regarding Hölderlin's poetry, du Bouchet concluded that "Ici, nulle naissance n'est mémorable, nous sommes, pour le dire, sans langue natale" [Here, no birth is memorable, we are, to say it, without a mother tongue] (169). These are rather surprising words, given that du Bouchet pronounced them at a celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of Hölderlin's birth, to suggest that Hölderlin's poetry evokes neither the figure of a celebrant nor an ascendancy nor the attainment of the grace of good measure proposed by Heidegger. Du Bouchet continued by stating that "une feuille de papier, que l'on tourne, n'est pas la couverture d'un célébrant, le fer battu, tôle, toiture, du lieu en déshérence aujourd'hui rentre dans le bleu qui est l'oubli, parler ne constitue pas un ascendant, la poésie en tant qu'office, parole

du privilège, parole unique—de la langue souveraine, unique, se découvre sans emploi ni même lieu" [a sheet of paper, which we turn, is not the cover of a celebrant, the hammered iron, sheet metal, roofing, of the place in escheat today goes back into the blue which is oblivion, to speak does not constitute an ascendant, poetry as an office, as privileged words, unique words—of sovereign language, unique, reveals itself to be useless and even out of place] (169–70). The surface on which words are inscribed, the page of the poem, alters and determines the content of these words. It alters what they meant or wanted to say. Du Bouchet further suggests that a poetry of the "unique" is useless and groundless. The idea that the words of poetry express the unique is no longer tenable, and these words no longer signify an ascendant—the rise of a new fateful star—nor do they announce a privileged religious function ("office"): their sovereignty is useless. Indeed, du Bouchet's reflections on Hölderlin are closer to Louis-René des Forêts's suggestion, in "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce," that our century ought to be rid of "childish mythology," to which he added: "Salvation, what does salvation matter, is there any such thing for someone who rushes toward the supreme point beyond which this all too human notion vanishes with all the rest?" (296).

André du Bouchet's reading of "In lieblicher Bläue" in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui" suggests that the danger of discourse is not only that it can, and often does, erase the temporality conditioning words, but that another equally necessary "depth" may also disappear, the Kantian *a priori* intuition conditioning the presence of mind to speak, which is space: "Je parle—mais ici où il me semble que je commence à parler, où je viens de commencer à parler, le temps me manque" [I speak—but here where I think I begin to speak, where I have begun to speak, time is lacking] (168). Du Bouchet's understanding of poetry's language distinguishes him both from Heideggerian readings of Hölderlin and from the romantic suggestion that poetry expresses man's profound destiny. Rather than being hidden in the depths of the poem, man's destiny floats on or hovers over the page's surface: "Rien ne peut faire, quant à une profondeur en laquelle, parlant ou non, *in lieblicher Bläue*, nous nous trouvons immergés—que ce ne soit par des surfaces, au plus vite, de remploi, comme extérieures, hâtives, en retrait de ce qu'elles transmettent, traduisent, ou réfléchissent, qu'il nous faille aller encore" [Nothing can change, with regard to a depth in which, speaking or not, *in lieblicher Bläue*, we find ourselves immersed—that it is by surfaces, as fast as possible, reused, as though exterior, hasty, standing back from what they transmit, translate, or reflect, that we still need to pass] (168). Just when we seem to be in the depth ("in lieblicher Bläue") of a given situation (the context of enunciation), this depth becomes little more than an often reused, and reusable, two-dimensional surface or commonplace "surfaces, as fast as possible, reused." These statements bear on the questions of man's "poetic existence" and of poetry's supposed depth. Through the poem, the event's unique time and place are displaced, disconcerted, and dislodged from any unique moment in time. What had been presumed to lie in the depths of the sacredly unique rises to the surface, to commonplaces pronounceable by all.

The poem's reusability, citability, and reiterability undermine poetry's supposed ability to iterate "uniquely unique" events. Its reiterability also destroys the poem's illusory depths, to reveal a surface depth that occurs at the level of the sheet of paper, which du Bouchet related to the "tôle" [das Blech] of "In lieblicher Bläue": "Sur le papier, paroi de la parole inscrite . . . *das Blech, in lieblicher Bläue*, ou la tôle . . . couvertures passagères, comme anachronique toujours" [On the paper, wall of inscribed words . . . *das Blech, in lieblicher Bläue*, or the sheet metal . . . passing covers, as though always anachronistic] (168). Du Bouchet freely paraphrased the words "das Blech, in lieblicher Bläue" as "Sur le papier, paroi de la parole inscrite." In so doing, he associated the apparent depths of inscribed words to the surface support, the paper, "das Blech," and "la tôle." These surfaces might also be the curve of a seemingly more permanent "bombement de l'asphalte" [camber of the asphalt] that is capable of producing the illusion of depth, and the mirage of a sheet of blue stretching out before us in the distance: "ou ce bombement de l'asphalte des routes qui, moyennant la conjonction du soleil et d'une rapidité produira, aussi bien que la tôle immobile—*das Blech*—d'un pan de toiture confondue à l'air, en avant de nous comme une aride nappe d'eau bleue" [or this camber of the roads' asphalt which, considering the conjunction of the sun and speed will produce, just as will the immobile sheet metal—*das Blech*—of a section of

roofing joined with the air, ahead of us like an arid sheet of blue water] (169). Rather than a beneficial or revelatory illusion, such as Rimbaud's "salons au fond d'un lac," for du Bouchet, this illusion can only be qualified as "arid": "like an arid sheet of blue water." It promises the "adorable blue," but remains arid and barren. The illusion would be total only if the confusion of the reflecting surface with the distance is absolute, only if "das Blech" or "section of roofing" is absolutely "joined with the air." In fact, André du Bouchet's promise of "blue" evokes our voracious desire for a Mallarmean "azure blue," but, as even Mallarmé admitted, this promise remains ironically distant.[50]

The poem's expression of its own illusory depth also reveals the illusion of its uniqueness, and the illusion of its sovereign "will-to-say." In ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," du Bouchet considers the illusion of particularity through what he calls "la parole de Cassandre," whose voice, like the voice of poetry, remains uncertain, almost silent. Du Bouchet also cites Hölderlin's *Mnémosyne* ("Ein Zeichen sind wir deutungslos"), in which a breach in language yields a meaningless, uninterpretable sign: "Parole de la rupture, comme au travers de la langue héritée que chacun de nous *possède*, le point, alors, parmi d'autres, de l'irruption, de la dépossession du dehors" [Words of rupture, as though through the inherited tongue which each of us *possesses*, the point, then, among others, of the irruption, of the dispossession of the exterior] (159).[51] The breach deprives us of our ability to interpret what we apprehend, yet du Bouchet also tempers his judgment by reinterpreting the verse from *Mnémosyne* as "un signe, comme vide de sens" [a sign, as though empty of meaning] (159). What at first had appeared as a sign deprived of meaning is reinterpreted through the modified "*comme* vide de sens." Cassandra's seemingly meaningless voice produces "une entame dans le sens, une enclave dans *notre* langue de ce futur retranché, pour chacun de nous impraticable—l'impression chaque fois du temps à venir, imminent, où, une fois de plus, il le faut nous nous séparerons" [a first cut into meaning, an enclave in *our* tongue of this removed future, for each of us impracticable—the impression each time of the time to come, imminent, when, once again, it must be so we will part] (161). What is produced is not only our sense of the insufficiency of our language and its meanings, but also the sense

of another time: a time that is yet to come and that, nevertheless, also spells the end of communion: "we will part."

By referring to Cassandra's apparently distinct voice, André du Bouchet also distinguishes his experience of poetry and event(s) from Heidegger's and Hölderlin's. Du Bouchet at first seems to equate poetry with the myth of Cassandra's prophecies. Yet, he also describes Cassandra's "parole distincte" as a breach or incision in our language. Cassandra prophesies another future that is withdrawn or cut off ("retranché") from the social voice that seeks to repress the meaning of "la parole de Cassandre"[52]: "Cela, qui s'ouvre, comme au détriment de la signification première, sur un instant d'*après*, une part de nous s'accorde à le refuser. Vocable inaudible, affirme la voix mêlée des uns et des autres, ou illisible" [That, which opens, as though to the detriment of the primary meaning, onto an instant that comes *after*, a part of us agrees to refuse it. Inaudible vocable, affirms the joint voice of these and the others, or illegible] (161). Cassandra's unique voice seeks to prophesy another communal future, but it is also necessarily crushed, affirmed to be inaudible and illegible by the anonymous force "of these and the others" who reject the existence of Cassandra's voice. In this momentary flux of meaning, however, Cassandra's seemingly unique voice takes its place, and revokes "ours." It leaves behind a trace: what Jacques Dupin calls a paraphic illegibility that the intermixed social voice perceives only as opening onto "an instant that comes *after*," and onto the expectancy of a future ("avenir").

Du Bouchet also links "la parole de Cassandre" to the hovering cry of the swallows in Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue" by repeating the chorus's question as to whether Cassandra "n'a pas un langage inconnu de barbare, comme l'hirondelle" [possesses a barbarian's unknown language, like the swallow] (161). Just as the "adorable blue" appears as a three-dimensional reflection on the two-dimensional plane of a church tower tin roof, so does the poem's apparent depth or ability to impart God's measure upon the human (to create him in his image) also reveal itself as a surface support. Rather than allowing man to compare himself "not unhappily against the godhead,"[53] as Heidegger suggests, poetry can also be barbarous and can inhumanly reject such humanizing representations. Similarly, by translating "umschweben" as "planer" ("plane un cri d'hirondelles" for "Den umschwebet Ge-

schrei von Schwalben" [the swallows' hovering scream]), du Bouchet expresses the image's banality, the two-dimensional nature of the "tôle," and the surface of inscription of both poetry and painting ("nature morte").

As with Cassandra's "parole," the swallows' cry *apposes* itself to the apparent meaning or measure of the "adorable blue" (or the chorus' voice). Yet it is only apposed, since this "Schwalben Geschrei" does not pierce *through* the "adorable blue" sheet ("nappe") to reach or to span a depth beyond the superficiality of the adorable blue or the chorus's voice. This scream simply pierces, without evoking any underlying depth, and the plane reaffirms its homogeneity as an overlay of multiple planes that are continually recomposed as "une seule étendue homogène, aplanie, étale plus haut . . . presque le silence, ou la nappe qu'une nouvelle fois perce, une telle parole plane . . . *umschwebet* . . . *Den umschwebet Geschrei von Schwalben*" [a single homogeneous expanse, leveled, steady higher up . . . almost the silence, or the sheet, again pierced by such hovering words . . . *umschwebet* . . . *Den umschwebet Geschrei von Schwalben*] (162). As with Baudelaire's "gouffre," what is pierced (and called a plane or a sheet of words) are what du Bouchet calls "acquired meanings" [significations acquises], which, like our representations of the world, need to be "traversed."

Once the "adorable blue" sheet is pierced, what appears is not some unfathomable depth beyond the given, but another sheet or plane: "une telle planitude [qui] est le gouffre encore, [qui] affleure au travers du sens dévolu, pour traduire un lendemain déjà en cours, présent déjà en tant que silence . . . *Ein stilles Leben ist es*" [such a plane [that] is again the abyss, [which] shows through the surface of handed-down meaning, to translate a tomorrow that is already underway, already present as silence . . . *Ein stilles Leben ist es*] (163). The expression "affleure *au* travers" suggests overlapping planes, where the abyss pierces through or surfaces through a two-dimensional, rather than three-dimensional surface. More to the point, this expression neutralizes the sense of potential depth, and evokes something piercing *within* the two-dimensional surface, rather than *through* some three-dimensional depth. The chasm that pierces within, but not absolutely through, language demonstrates that poetry is neither the expression of the possibility of figuring the human nor the successful disclosure of the "will-to-say" the human. Rather, poetry produces a perpetual oscillation between the appearance and disappearance of "our" will-to-meaning ("vouloir dire").

In "Sous le linteau en forme de joug," from *l'Incohérence* (1979), "Das Blech" also refers to the two-dimensional support of an artwork, in this instance the lithography of the artist Pierre Tal Coat. It refers to "la plaque" etched by the lithographer's acid:

L'ancien, et le frais. *Vert* qui se nomme,
ailleurs que dans la morsure par l'acide, d'une
plaque, prairie. Parole et inarticulé: le *vert*
accompagne, jusqu'à se fondre, une prairie, il en
sort aussi vite—comme de la parole l'inarti-
culé. (np)[54]

. . . trait qui scinde,
comme libre,
une fraction de temps,
de la figure
qu'il lui échoit
d'envelopper
aussitôt qu'il départage . . .

[The ancient and the fresh. *Green* that is called,
elsewhere than in the bite of the acid,
into a sheet, prairie. Words and the inarticulate: the *green*
accompanies, to the point of merging, a prairie, it goes
out of it just as fast—as from words the inarticu-
late.]

. . . stroke that splits,
as though free,
a fraction of time,
of the figure
that it befalls him
to envelop
as soon as it decides . . .

"Sous le linteau en forme de joug" proposes a distinction between the color green as evocative of the referent "prairie," and green as evocative of the signifying procedure of etching this field of green onto a lithographer's stone or sheet ("das Blech"). The green of lithography seemingly accompanies the signified green named "prairie" to the point of fusion, but only seemingly. For du Bouchet the engravings of the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Hercules Seghers equally reject the illusion of perspective, and reject the fusion of immediate reality and linguistically mediate images. His etchings of a mountain landscape, for instance, become what du Bouchet called "la montagne acide" [the acid mountain] (np), referring more to the ground upon which the mountain is inscribed than to external reality: "Dans l'épaisseur / des représentations de montagne de Hercules Seghers, / un affleurement de burin qui les traverse, un jour se révèle en tant que trait, rien qu'un trait, pas montagne" [In the depth / of Hercules Seghers's representations of mountains, / a flushing of burin that traverses them / a day reveals itself as a stroke, nothing but a stroke, not mountain] (np). The mountain becomes nothing but a line, and art's will to signify the green of the field (Tal Coat) or

the presence of the mountain (Seghers) is disclaimed by pictorial line and by the "cassure" that assures a multiplicity of equally superimposed meanings.[55]

Du Bouchet's consideration of art's relation to immediate reality, interpreted as the inarticulate or the inarticulable, also refers to Hölderlin's poem "In lieblicher Bläue." Specifically, art's timely scission of reality ("trait qui scinde") refers to the various meanings ascribed to the words "abgesondert" [se dessine] and "herauskommt" [apparaît] in Hölderlin's verses "Wenn abgesondert so sehr die Gestalt ist, die / Bildsamkeit herauskommt dann des Menschen." In ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," rather than merely using the words "se dessine" and "apparaît" to describe the figure, du Bouchet suggests that this figure never fully emerges, but remains "reserved," returning to the seemingly amorphous plane of the page. Rather than the word "apparaît" for "herauskommt," he suggests the painterly verb "ressortir." In the version of ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui" published in *L'Incohérence,* du Bouchet writes:

Ressort—*herauskommt*—et rentre sans relâche, s'efface dans la blancheur de ce support au plus proche de nous sans nom . . . Pour un temps . Sur une cassure . . .	*se détache, ressort*
Et, de la profondeur en surplomb perpétuel, sur laquelle donne ce qui reçoit nom de poème, die Bildsamkeit herauskommt dann des Menschen . . . (np)	*la figure sitôt ressort, de l'homme* . . .
[Stands out—*herauskommt*—and returns without respite, fades in the whiteness of this support that is closest to us without name . . . For a time . On a fault . . .	*sticks out, stands out*
And, from the depth perpetually standing out, on which gives what receives the name of poem, die Bildsamkeit herauskommt dann des Menschen . . .	*the figure immediately stands out, of man* . . .]

By interpreting "herauskommt" as "se détache," and as "ressort," du Bouchet also alluded to Cassandra's prophecies, and to the perpetual confusion of the "blue" with its own reflection: "Parole de Cassandre . . . paroles d'hirondelles . . . qui ne se prononcera qu'au prix, sitôt presque, de sa disparition, comme le bleu de l'air réfléchi rentre dans le bleu" [Cassandra's words . . . words of swallows . . . that will be pronounced only at the price, immediately almost, of their disappearance, as the blue of the reflected air returns into the blue] (165). Cassandra prophesies, but

her words are also forgotten: "Mais l'avenir proféré lui-même s'oublie, comme au plus vite une parole va—ici je m'aide, à contre-sens, aveuglément, de la première assonance venue—sur le *bläue,* l'oubli" [But the proffered future is itself forgotten, as a saying goes as quickly as possible—here I make use, against the grain, blindly, of the first assonance that offers itself—on the *bläue,* forgetfulness] (165).[56] The poet plays the role of Cassandra, blindly equating forgetfulness ("oubli") with the color blue ("bläue") by punning on the similar sounds involved.

Two years following ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous* (1972), du Bouchet returned to the question of a "surface depth" in the context of Alberto Giacometti's work on paper, of which he asked: "Does it not mark, each time anew, the temporary lifting of some taboo?"[57] For du Bouchet, Giacometti's drawings obliterate any already preestablished figure (13), to successfully "traverse" their own figural representations, and to evoke a perpetually future sky that is equally perpetually withdrawn from "us": "Ce lointain jamais rejoint qui se soustrait à nous" [This background never rejoined that withdraws itself from us] (62). Du Bouchet also related the figure "de 'nous' " [of "us"] to what he called "the sign of the null" (60); another reference to Hölderlin's evocation of the self as a meaningless sign—"Ein Zeichen sind wir deutungslos":

> Ce signe nul dont toute figure dans l'air se voit frappé—signe de l'ouvert qui défigure—nous le tenons aussi, avant de l'admettre pour une étrangeté. . . . Et, au coeur de nous-mêmes, sur cela nous nous brisons. . . .
>
> Ce "nous," je ne le prononce pas sans le voir aussitôt comme concassé dans la singularité de chacun—scindé. (63)
>
> [This null sign with which every figure in the air finds itself struck—sign of the open that disfigures—we hold it to be, before admitting it for a strangeness. . . . And, at the heart of ourselves, on this we break. . . .
>
> This "we," I do not pronounce it without immediately seeing it as though crushed into the singularity of each one—split.]

This strangely familiar and disfiguring "signe nul" leaves its imprint on all figures. It both produces the "nous" and crushes it ("concassé"). The promise of community persists in an unex-

pected and unhoped-for space that du Bouchet had evoked as early as 1956 in *Le Moteur blanc*: "I again found myself / free / and without hope" (59). The ruptured form of this community, apparent both in Giacometti's drawings and in du Bouchet's poetry, attempts to abolish the form inherent in the aesthetic, without simply falling into the totality of the formless.[58]

The question of the "we" of community in du Bouchet's poetry is equally related to the question of the first person singular. In *Dans la chaleur vacante*, for instance, du Bouchet wrote, "I write as far away as possible from myself" [J'écris aussi loins que possible de moi] (38), thus anticipating his Rimbaldian characterization of his work in 1984: "Si je me rejoins, je rejoins un autre à l'infini" [If I am reunited with myself, I am reunited with another infinitely].[59] In *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*, this joining with an other is never fully accomplished. It reaches toward the "visage d'un autre—qui est le notre" [the face of another—which is our own] (48), yet this face or figure is not simply what the poem or work "meant to say." As in "Image à terme," this face or figure traverses or nullifies the work of art to the point that "à son terme—elle se présentera inachevée" [at its term—it presents itself uncompleted] (81). Like the disintegration of "nous," the "I" and the poem's totality are, by way of a reference to Giacometti, equally always evoked as unrealizable:

> Oeuvre—non. Tout est à réaliser où "nous" sommes (scinder)
>
> ———————
>
> Ce vide au centre, que le trait fuit (77)
>
> [Work—no. Everything is to be realized where "we" are (split)
>
> ———————
>
> This emptiness in the center, which the stroke flees].

In his collection *Air*, André du Bouchet already had evoked a figure that forever appears as (an) other: "Tu apparais, quand je tourne la tête, comme une chose sauvage" [You appear, when I turn away, like a savage thing] (39). This poem in fact recalls Arthur Rimbaud's hope-filled poem, "A une raison" (1871), in which he wrote: "Ta tête se détourne: le nouvel amour! Ta tête se retourne,—le nouvel amour" [Your head turns away: the new love! Your head turns back again—the new love].[60] Rimbaud's love is mobile and instable, and appears as perpetually other. The head that appears and disappears also suggests that Giacometti's drawings are not figural representations, but the simultaneous presentation of the figure in the drawing and of the figure perceiving the drawing—"we" the viewers. Drawing thus becomes the biography not only of the artist or of his subject, but of the viewer as well. Furthermore, as du Bouchet suggests in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*, the artist's perception does not simply present an object, but the question of its resistance to and desistance from our gaze: "Une chose arrêtée dans la lumière qu'elle nous renvoie, dont parfois nous ne savons rien, sinon qu'elle est devant nous, à peine allons-nous à elle que nous l'avons traversée, atteint le repoussoir rayonnant de la paroi—le papier, déjà—dont elle se détache" [A thing caught in the light which it reflects back to us, of which sometimes we know nothing, except that it is in front of us, hardly do we move toward it that we have traversed it, reached the surface's radiant repoussoir—the paper, already—from which it stands out] (11).

In "L'Effet d'étrangeté," Maurice Blanchot succinctly characterized the incompleteness of du Bouchet's poetry as a form of "dispersion that, as such, finds its form," one that struggles against "the essence of division, and yet on the basis of division." In such poetry "everything is ruptured, broken, without relation, one no longer moves from one sentence to another, from one word to another." Yet from all of this destruction what arises in each word is "their presence that erases them, their absence that calls them—and not words, but the space that appearing, disappearing, they designate as the turbulent space of their appearance and disappearance."[61] Blanchot's description of du Bouchet's poetry follows a line of thought Georges Bataille had pursued in "Absence de mythe," namely, in striving to destroy poetic form, does not the poem tend toward its own absolute destruction? As du Bouchet suggested in "Baudelaire irrémédiable," Baudelaire's poetry destroys the poem's oneiric web by weaving the destruction of poetic form into the poem's dream as "the interruption of the imaginary within the imaginary" (12). In referring to poetry as one of the greatest struggles ("une lutte suprême") against the essence of division, yet based on division, Blanchot also was

thinking of the mediation of conceptual thought against which poetry struggles in an attempt to push mediation to its own logical paradox: the objectless mediation of mediation. In this struggle, the words rise up against the connections established between them and to their supposed object. Du Bouchet's rejection of the totalizing work ("l'Oeuvre") in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous* also points to the marginality or eccentricity of the mind or spirit: "Il n'y a pas de vestiges. L'esprit seul est vestige au monde qu'il découvre hors de l'esprit" [There are no vestiges. The mind alone is a vestige in the world it discovers outside of the mind] (78). The poetic figure seeks to incorporate the formless into form, *but it also expresses form's inability to definitively grasp the formless*. It thus becomes what du Bouchet named "[une] figure à venir" [(a) figure that is yet to come] (78), and the work's totality remains subjugated to incompleteness: "Cela—l'œuvre ici dont le total, arbitraire toujours, ainsi que dans chacune de ses unités imprévues, assume un inachèvement, n'aura au mieux valeur que de point liminaire" [That—the work here whose total, always arbitrary, as in each of its unforeseen unities, fulfills an incompletion, will at best have the value of an introductory point" (112). The work's totality becomes arbitrary, and no more than a starting point for a perpetually unfinished work.

A note Alberto Giacometti wrote in the margin of a book in October 1965, and which du Bouchet repeatedly cites in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*, is an instance of the work's incompleteness: "Tout cela n'est pas grand chose, toute la peinture, sculpture, dessin, écriture ou plutôt littérature, tout cela à sa place et pas plus. Les essais c'est tout. oh merveille" [All of this is no big deal, all painting, sculpture, drawing, writing, or rather literature, all this has its place and no more. Attempts, that is all. oh wonder].[62] Giacometti's "essais" also question the possibility of a unified community, as du Bouchet noted in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*: "Ce n'est pas dans une oeuvre l'oeuvre qui importe finalement mais ce qui aura été ressenti comme la nécessité de mettre entre elle et 'nous' au plus vite la distance" [In a work, it is not the work that matters in the end, but what will have been felt as the necessity to immediately distance it from 'us'] (108). The community ("nous") must be founded on something other than on the total work of art ("l'Œuvre"). Du Bouchet thus rejects, as do the other poets of *L'Ephémère*, the romantic notion of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, since "we" and the work of art amount to nothing or are null ("deutungslos"): "De 'nous', rien . . . Rien dans l'air—de qui a respiré. Sinon une parole peut-être—mais parole qu'accompagne un autre souffle" [Of "us," nothing . . . Nothing in the air—of who breathed. Except perhaps words—but words accompanied by another breath] (43). Rather than absolutely present and unique, this "parole" is accompanied by another "souffle" that undermines its unity. As in Jacques Dupin's collection *Contumace*, the ruptured "parole" is "the incompletion of words" and "words that return, without ever having come" (101–2).

In *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*, the community's presentation or inscription in the poem is endless and endlessly rejected. As with Jacques Dupin's "excédent de parole," du Bouchet proposes that art contains a "trace de l'excédent non réalisé jamais" [trace of the excedent not realized ever] (45) that is "En avant de nous: mais dans ce vide de l'étendue qui se propose encore—*oh merveille!*—à nous, nous avons pied déjà" [Ahead of us: but in the emptiness of the expanse that still proposes itself—*oh wonder!*—to us, we already have a foothold] (45). The figure that appears remains marginal or ahead of us, allowing for the potential community of the "we," but only tangentially. As with Bonnefoy's "unresolved constellation," however, du Bouchet also does not absolutely reject the promise of the figure of community. With reference to the overlay of an indefinite number of lines in Giacometti's drawings, du Bouchet wrote: "Ainsi se vérifie et se subtilise, dans une sorte d'emboîtement indéfini, et par les voies d'un échange qui la porte à effervescence, cette figure encore, en avant de nous, qui miroite" [Thus is verified and made more subtle, in a sort of indefinite interlocking, and by way of an exchange that brings it to the point of effervescence, this figure again, ahead of us, that shimmers] (18). The drawing mirrors the figure, but, perhaps as with the constellation in Mallarmé's "Sonnet en -yx," it also reveals the constellation's or the work's distance and deferral through the mirror of art. The poem refers to the exteriority of words, to expectant words, and to something ("*Cela*") unsaid that traverses the poem's "vouloir-dire": "Au travers de ce qui est dit—jusqu'à le recouvrir . . . *cela*, qui se fera jour, est à dire . . . / . . . pour rien (. . . qui me reste à dire, comme mourir, encore)" [Through what is said—to the point of recovering it . . .

that, that will become day, I to be said . . . / . . . for nothing (. . . that I still have to say, as I have to die, still)] (149). Just as one had yet to experience death in Baudelaire's "Rêve d'un curieux," here something remains to be said: an experience forever always remaining unsaid or exterior to the poem's "vouloir-dire."

In his second homage to Pierre Reverdy, entitled "interstice élargi jusqu'au dehors toujours l'interstice" (1990), du Bouchet suggested that poetry attempts to dislodge the mind's consciousness of the world: "ce que la poésie—en cours de réalisation incessant, peut dans l'inachèvement placer sous les yeux, c'est justement un point momentané où l'esprit cesse d'avoir prise, et ce point, qui déséquilibrera, lui-même alors réintégré au centre en mouvement" [what poetry—incessantly in the process of realizing itself, can place through its incompletion before our eyes, is precisely a momentary point where the mind no longer has any hold, and this point, which will unbalance, itself then reintegrated into the center in motion].[63] Rather than attempt to posit the self in this "momentary point," poetry demonstrates that this point cannot be occupied by the self's spirit or mind. In *Peinture* (1983), du Bouchet named the point of poetry a place that is "retranchée du sens" [withdrawn from meaning], impenetrable to the mind, and prior to thought:

> présent avant l'esprit: retrouver le point où je suis—perdu
> et en avant de moi—de même qu'au départ—au présent. j'ai
> disparu.
>
> point—au regard de l'esprit,
> détaché de nouveau, qui le scrute—comme vide. en induire,
> et sur son déplacement—là même où un retard doit être réparé—la
> plénitude qui devance dans l'un et l'autre sens.[64]
>
> [present before the mind: to find again the point where I am—lost
> and ahead of myself—as at the beginning—in the present, I have
> disappeared.
>
> point—to the mind's eye,
> detached again, that scrutinizes it—as though empty. to infer,
> in its displacement—there where a delay must be repaired—the
> plenitude that anticipates in one and the other direction.]

The mind scrutinizes the point, "where I am" ("où je suis") but as an inscrutable plenitude. Painting and poetry are exterior,

even inconsequential, to the mind's scrutiny and to its temporal understanding of the world. Indeed, poetry provokes this "disconcerting" sense of its own inconequence in the mind:

> son support
> interrompu, l'esprit qui, assidûment, s'y est appliqué, aussitôt
> se voit déconcerté. c'est
> l'espace. de nouveau, le support tangible—la matérialité
> de ce support—étant en deça, un instant, de lui. (68)
> [its support
>
> interrupted, the mind that, assiduously, had applied itself to it,
> straightaway
> is disconcerted. it is
> the space. again, the tangible support—the materiality
> of this support—being short, for an instant, of it.]

The unfinished and nontotalized "nature" of painting and of poetry spells their ability to displace insignificant and unassimilable fragments that subsist beyond the mind's totalizing comprehension. What disconcerts the mind's understanding of the point of poetry is a spatial materiality that cannot be temporalized. It is a point that in *". . . désaccordée comme par la neige" et "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986,"* du Bouchet referred to as an "obstacle / de ce qui échappe à la saisie dans l'instant où l'on croit avoir saisi, et se découvre, si l'on n'a pas craint de perdre pied, dans la langue en tant que l'amorce ou le vestige d'une parole comme étrangère dans sa proximité" [obstacle / of what cannot be grasped in the instant when one believes to have grasped, and reveals itself, if one has not feared to lose one's foothold, in language as the start or the vestige of words seemingly foreign in their proximity].[65] Like "la parole de Cassandre," this point announces a new and strange "parole" that promises the figure of community: "nous sommes . . . ce qui inlassablement pour le futur se soustrait à la parole, et la parole" [we are . . . what untiringly for the future eludes words, and words] (60). The communal "we" is drawn away from words for the sake of a future and of future words.

In ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," André du Bouchet suggested that "la parole de Cassandre n'est pas de la dépendance d'un *vouloir dire*" [Cassandra's words do not depend upon a *will-to-meaning*]. In "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986," Hölderlin's poetry is

described as "comme affranchi, à l'occasion, de la langue dans laquelle il sera venu s'inscrire" [as though freed, on occasions, from the language in which it has come to be inscribed]. By not depending on "un vouloir dire," "la parole de Cassandre" is also mythical and timeless, whereas the poem is not absolutely freed from its "vouloir dire." The poem is only "comme affranchi," and, rather than being the equivalent of Cassandra's mythical status, it questions its own status as myth. The poem's relative independence from its will-to-meaning is what du Bouchet (inspired by Hölderlin's multiple versions of the poem "Der Einzige") called a moment of "fraîcheur," where the work's end also implies the deferral of an ending. In "Der Einzige" Hölderlin wrote: "Wohl tut / Die Erde. Zu kühlen. Immer aber," which du Bouchet translated as "Grand bien produit / la terre. A fraîchir. Toujours pourtant."[66] "Fraîcheur" evokes art's concomitant fusion with and incision of the earth. It rends this earth in the process of "saying it." For poetry, both the absolute "will-to-meaning" and its absolute rejection are impossible. In *L'Incohérence*, for instance, du Bouchet suggested that the absolute realization of will-to-meaning can occur only when the subject's will itself has disappeared: "Si j'arrive à bout / de ce que je veux dire, je l'aurai dit sans le vouloir" [If I get to the end / of what I want to say, I will have said it without wanting to] (np). To reach this point or end would imply the destruction of the subject's will-to-meaning, but as it approaches its end, at the limit of the human, the poetic self breaks away from itself and from its end. To reach the image's end ("terme"), to evoke the object in its immediacy, would also be to actualize language's sovereign distance from its object and to evoke our own end. As du Bouchet wrote in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous*: "un *objet*, brisant le pourtour qui le localise, et qui pour nous marquerait, si nous nous arrêtions à lui, notre terme" [an *object*, breaking the perimeter that localizes it, and which for us would mark, if we stopped at it, our end] (23–24). Rather than reaching an absolute end, however, the poet focuses on the break ("cassure") or what, in *Pourquoi si calmes*, du Bouchet referred to as "la fraîcheur de l'infiguré" [the freshness of the unfigured] (38). What is in fact at stake in the term "fraîcheur" is the impossibility of reading poetry, in this instance Paul Celan's, as either a humanist or an anti-humanist project.[67] Or, as Celan wrote in *"Le Méridien"*: "It is about getting out of the human, into a domain that is turned toward the human but in such a way that the human feels that it is out of place" (18).[68] To which du Bouchet's collection *Rapides* (1980) seems to respond: "inhumain n'est pas l'interruption de la parole, mais, par route ou papier, le support indifférent à quoi elle, comme l'éclair, et par elle aussi, a permis de percer" [inhuman is not the interruption of words, but, by road or paper, the indifferent support through which, like lightning, and by which also, it has allowed to pierce].[69]

In "Tübingen le 22 mai 1986" André du Bouchet offered a lengthy commentary of Paul Celan's poem "Todtnauberg" and of his own translation, consideration of which will allow us to approach the question of poetry's humanism or antihumanism (see appendix C).[70] The first three lines of "Todtnauberg" can almost be read as a separate poem: "Arnika, Augentrost, der / Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem / Sternwürfel drauf" [Arnica, luminet, cette / gorgée du puits au / cube étoilé plus haut du dé]. The poem begins with a reference to the romantic topos of "der Trunk aus dem Brunnen" [draft from the well], and with the promise of a healing balm, "Augentrost" [eyebright], for which du Bouchet suggested the term "euphrasie": "c'est la même plante, luminet, plante qui guérit les affections de la vue. *Augentrost*" [it is the same plant, eyebright, plant that heals affections of sight].[71] Whereas du Bouchet initially translated "Sternwürfel drauf" as "cube étoilé plus haut du dé," in "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986" he proposed the following interpretation: "cube étoilé ou dé. un morceau d'anthracite, ai-je cru percevoir, ce jour-là, dans le timbre du mot-à-mot, à facette noires . . . je renoncerai, sur l'instant à saisir: un mot, voilà tout" [starred cube of die. a piece of anthracite, I thought I perceived, on that day, in the timbre of the word-for-word, with black facets . . . I will renounce, for the instant to grasp: a word, that is all] (82). Du Bouchet refused to render the word "Sternwürfel" as a poetic image, and he refused to interpret this word as somehow referring to an object outside the hut, on or next to the well ("Brunnen"). Rather, he retranslated "Sternwürfel" as: "le cube étoilé du dé" [the die's starred cube], along with the following commentary: "l'un *et* l'autre termes de l'alternative en jeu, alors qu'en français il ne peut être question que de l'un *ou* de l'autre—d'un cube ou d'un dé" [one *and* the other terms of the alternative at stake, while in French it can

only be a question of one *or* the other—a cube or a die] (83). Two apposed words, not one *or* the other, but one *and* the other: the starred cube's lightless scintillation.

In "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986," du Bouchet noted that Celan spelled out for him the translation of the brief second stanza: "dans la / hutte" for "in der / Hütte." Specifically, Celan proposed "la hutte avec une minuscule, rien naturellement, à ma connaissance, qu'une hutte. le nom de la résidence de campagne de Heidegger—résidence secondaire—Celan aura estimé superflu, revenant sur le poème, de m'en aviser" [the hut in lowercase, nothing naturally, to my knowledge, but a hut. the name of Heidegger's country residence—secondary residence—Celan judged it superfluous, coming back to the poem, to advise me of it] (81–82). The word "hut" remains in lowercase, and without specific reference to Heidegger as the "thinker" of the verse "auf eines Denkenden."[72]

Both the French and English translations of the third stanza struggle to render the torment of German syntax and of the thought or prose of the thinking:

die in das Buch
—wessen Namen nahms auf
vor dem meinein?—,
die in dies Buch
geschriebene Zeile von
einer Hoffnung, heute,
auf eines Denkenden
kommendes
Wort
im Herzen

[là, dans un livre,
—les noms, de qui, relevés
avant le mien?—
là dans un livre,
lignes qui inscrivent
une attente, aujourd'hui,
de qui méditera (à
venir, in-
cessamment venir)
un mot / du cœur].

André du Bouchet's translation expresses the poet's hope ("attente") of receiving a word from the thinker ("eines Denkenden"), and this hope is perpetually capable of coming ("kommendes"), not out of, but from within this heart: "*im* Herzen." Such an interpretation of "kommendes" explains du Bouchet's use of the word "attente" rather than the more literal "espoir": "lignes qui inscrivent / une attente, aujourd'hui, / de qui méditera (à / venir, in- / cessamment venir) / un mot / du cœur." Du Bouchet also explained his translation of "Todtnauberg" in terms of what he had earlier termed a Baudelairean lack or flaw in language: "'le mot du cœur'—sur la parole en défaut—à venir toujours, et encore à venir. dans la langue le pourri—pur surgissement—aujourd'hui" ["the word from the heart"—in words found lacking—always to come, and still to come. in the rotten language—pure surging—today] (87). In the absence of a word or in a faulty word ("sur la parole en défaut"), there remains the potential for the "kommendes / Wort / im Herzen." In ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," du Bouchet had already suggested that this "pure surging" depends on the word's reserve, and on its *not being* proffered as a Hölderlinian "parole du privilège, parole unique" [words of privilege, unique words] (170).

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, du Bouchet did read the word "Krudes" as a brutal obscenity:

Waldwasen, uneingeebnet,
Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,

Krudes, später, im Fahren,
deutlich,

der uns fährt, der Mensch,
der's mit anhört

[humus des bois, jamais aplani,
orchis, orchis, unique,

chose crue, plus tard, chemin faisant,
claire,

qui nous voitura,
l'homme,
lui-même à son écoute]

But du Bouchet also refused to reduce "Krudes" to one circumstantial interpretation of Celan's meeting with Heidegger. To reduce the word "Krudes" to a biographical invective of a poet against a philosopher is to read the poem-as-document, as does Kaddour, who, strangely, though not so surprisingly, favors translating "Knüppel- / pfade im Hochmoor" as "les sentiers / de gourdins dans la haute fagne." For him, it emphasizes "this other meaning of the ambivalent *Knüppel*, this potential marking of the image of Heidegger by the *bludgeons* [*gourdins*] of the Third Reich."[73] Without insisting on what motivates Kaddour's ideological reading of "Todtnauberg," no one has put more succinctly the dangers of such a documentary reading of the poem than Stanislas Breton, who asked whether we can be certain that "Celan, overwhelmed as he was by the horrible that did not cease to transfix him, was the messenger practically forced, given the absoluteness of the disaster, to deliver, through the disaster itself, what the absurd seemed to have abolished?"[74]

Rather than reducing the poet to the role of prophet of the apocalypse, in "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986" du Bouchet also suggested that "Krudes, später, im Fahren" evokes "la profération de rupture qu'aussitôt la respiration retrouvée momentanément corrige" [the proffering of rupture which once the breath gotten back momentarily corrects] (69), in which the word "Krudes" becomes "chose crue non précisée qui, sur le défaut inattendu de parole, où soudain une parole aura manqué, *Krudes*, comme aujourd'hui je l'entends, et le lirai, précisément devient composte, à nouveau le sol, ou humus, *Waldwasen*, humus de ces bois où viennent alors les mots et les plantes" [crude thing not specified which, in the unexpected absence of words, where suddenly words will have been found lacking, *Krudes*, as I hear it today, and will read it, becomes precisely compost, the earth again, or humus, *Waldwasen*, humus of these woods where the words and the plants come] (88). In this crudeness, the sudden vacancy in language, some new ground emerges. One might object that to translate "Krudes, später, im Fahren" as the expression of the condition of new growth is itself too Heideggerian; that it reduces Celan's poetry to an inward folding of poetry ("rentrer") onto its own formal constraints. Kaddour, for instance, argues that du Bouchet reduces "Todtnauberg" to his own poetic practice, and that he ahistorically reinterprets Celan's failed encounter with

Heidegger as poetry's renewed ability to announce its own origins. Regarding "Krudes" and "Waldwasen," however, du Bouchet also writes: " 'Krudes, später, im Fahren.' ainsi, chemin faisant, dans le poème intitulé 'Todtnauberg,' où, davantage que des livres du philosophe auprès de qui Paul Celan un jour aura souhaité se rendre, ressort, je crois, avec le poème, dans le cours du poème, la fraction de temps autonome à l'origine du poème, et dans laquelle lui-même, pour se soustraire à nous, et devenir lui-même—rien que lui-même, et alors, alors seulement, "nous" pouvons être là—pour la plus grande part il doit rentrer" ["Krudes, später, im Fahren." thus, going along, in the poem entitled "Todtnauberg," from which, more than from the books of the philosopher whom Paul Celan one day wished to visit, stands out, I believe, with the poem, throughout the poem, the fraction of autonomous time at the poem's origin, and into which the poem itself, to elude us, and to become itself—nothing but itself, and then, only then, can "we" be there—for the most part, must enter] (70). By emphasizing that the poem stands out from ("ressortir"), springs ("ressort"), or simply goes out again from an autonomous fraction of time in/from which the poem finds its beginnings, is born, and dies, du Bouchet in fact criticized Heideggerian interpretations of poetry.[75] Something remains outstanding that, as such, defers the poem's end: some form of what Paul Celan called a "singbarer Rest" that preserves—more so than the works of "the philosopher" ("davantage que des livres du philosophe")—the moment of autonomous time in which the poem originates: "la fraction de temps autonome à l'origine du poème."[76] Du Bouchet added: "dans la langue comme à contresens, tel un passage à vide, et, injure ici, une intrusion de l'élémentaire. *Krudes*. injure à la langue, prise de court, et à ce qu'on sait" [in language as though by mistranslation, as though going through a bad spell, and, insult here, an intrusion of the elementary. *Krudes*. insult aimed at language, caught off guard, and at what we know] (70). For du Bouchet, "*Krudes*" signifies both "[une] injure à la langue, prise de court" and "[une injure] à ce qu'on sait." The intrusion of the elementary wounds language and what it allows us to know. It is *also* an insult ("injure") flung at "ce qu'on sait." "Krudes" refers to the crude and bloodied raw flesh, but is also an insult hurled at thinking itself: "à ce qu'on sait"; an insult also, but not solely, flung at the thinker of "Todt-

nauberg" or at Heidegger's silence before Celan's questions when he visited Heidegger at Todtnauberg.

In translating "der uns fährt," from the sixth stanza, as "qui nous voitura," du Bouchet again recalled that it was Paul Celan who suggested this literal translation. He also again insisted that Celan never mentioned any specific individual (namely, Heidegger). Similarly, the names in the book ("das Buch"), not necessarily a register, remain unknown:

> *Krudes, später, im Fahren*: la brutalité, parole scandaleuse, mot révoltant prononcé plus tard, aura précisé Celan, au passage, par l'homme qui l'avait *voituré* (ainsi rendait-il en français la troisième personne au présent du verbe *fahren*) qui était venu le chercher en voiture. à défaut de saisir de quoi au juste il avait pu être question—je n'ai pas questionné—ni même songé à savoir—savoir si la brutalité du désaccord était imputable à qui alors avait *voituré* Celan plutôt qu'à l'hôte dont il attendait une parole qui, ai-je appris par la suite, et après sa mort, n'a pas été prononcé—de la parole attendue, lui-même ne m'aura pas dit un mot, et l'hôte, en la circonstance, pas une fois nommé ce jour-là. (86)
>
> [*Krudes, später, im Fahren*: the brutality, scandalous words, revolting word pronounced later, Celan specified, in passing, by the man who *wheeled* [*voituré*] him (thus did he render in French the third person present tense of the verb *fahren*) who had come to get him by car. failing to grasp what exactly this was about—I did not question—did not even think to establish—to know if the brutality of the discord was imputable to the one who had *wheeled* Celan rather than to the host from whom he expected a word which, as I learned later, and after his death, was not pronounced—of the expected work, he said nothing to me, and the host, on this occasion, was not named once on that day.]

As du Bouchet's repeated return to the last stanzas of "Todtnauberg" indicates, the brutality of "Krudes" is ambivalent. Du Bouchet relates "Krudes" to historical referents (either Heidegger or Celan's chauffeur), but also to the possible reserve of a life in the undergrowth or to "Orchis und Orchis": what is above and below, a promise tended and revoked.[77]

"Orchis und Orchis" is also related to the final stanza of "Todtnauberg": "die halb- / beschrittenen Knüppel- / pfade im

Hochmoor, / Feuchtes,viel" [à moitié / frayé le layon de rondins / là-haut dans le marais, / humide, / oui]. The translation of "Hochmoor" as "marais" fails to render the disquieting danger implied in the highland moor where one may sink, be absorbed. Or one might be forgotten, as the names of those who came before are registered, taken in, and absorbed—all meanings of "aufnehmen." In his reading of "Todtnauberg," Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe does evoke the danger in the word "Hochmoor," yet he does so in terms of a biographical reading of Celan's not having received the answer he expected from Heidegger. Lacoue-Labarthe wonders which words would have met Celan's expectations and "would have had enough force to pull him out of the threat of aphasia or idiomatism (the word's nonarrival [l'inavènement du mot]) into which this poem, mumbled against silence, could only sink, in the same way that one sinks into a moor [marais]."[78] Lacoue-Labarthe's interpretation is keenly sensitive to the nuances of Celan's "Todtnauberg," but it differs considerably from du Bouchet's in that it relies on a more literal or biographical account of Celan's trip to Todtnauberg. In du Bouchet's view the poem already has inscribed the reserve of this word-event. It inscribes the word's immanence "im Herzen," and not as a word absolutely emerging from this heart.

The words "im Hochmoor" evoke the unsettling site where one, thinker or poet, might founder, but in or from which there might also be a difficult or impossible path ("Knüppel- / pfade") for the "kommendes / Wort." The lines in the book also evoke this path. They disappear, they acknowledge that other lines and names must have preceded; names of those who knew neither what they expected nor what hope or despair they came to inscribe. These are half-remembered, half-forgotten, stumbling lines ("halb- / beschrittenen"), which, along with the lines and the book, are twice repeated: "die in das Buch / —wessen Namen nahms auf / vor dem meinein?—, / die in dies Buch / geschriebene Zeile von / einer Hoffnung, heute." Without this book there is neither "Augentrost" nor "Hochmoor," since it is the necessary surface for the simultaneous expression of regret and hope.

In "Tübingen, le 22 mai, 1986," André du Bouchet finally reveals something Paul Celan might have said to him: "'*il y a quelque chose de pourri dans la poésie de Hölderlin*.' oui, dans l'oeuvre qui, entre toutes, en appelle à une pureté—ou puissance

autonome—de la parole: et pour cela, je crois" ["*there is something rotten in Hölderlin's poetry*." yes, in the work that, among all others, appeals to a purity—or autonomous force—of words: and for that reason, I believe] (75–76). In fact, du Bouchet had already alluded to something rotten when he spoke of "Krudes" in terms of "humus." In this case, however, for Celan, what is rotten in Hölderlin's poetry is its call to purity and to what du Bouchet, in the concluding sentences of ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," called poetry "en tant qu'office, parole du privilège, parole unique—de la langue souveraine, unique" [as office, as privileged words, unique words—of sovereign language, unique] (170), but which he then disqualified as a poetry that, today, is "sans emploi ni même lieu" [useless and even out of place] (170).

For du Bouchet, Hölderlin's "rot" refers not only to Heidegger, Celan, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Reverdy. It also refers to another French author whose works examine the proper, the improper, and the "fresh": Francis Ponge. In *Le Verre d'eau* (1950), Ponge attempted to dissolve the French language *and* poetry in this liquid without qualities. In "La Poésie française. Francis Ponge: *Le Verre d'eau*" (1951), du Bouchet quoted Ponge's own evocation of the impossibility of a pure language: "Ah! Il y a quelque chose de pourri dans la langue française! / Mais comment donc en sortir? (Va donc en sortir! . . .)" [Ah! Something is rotten in the French language! / But how to get out of it? (Try getting out of it! . . .)].[79] For du Bouchet, Ponge's remark about the rot of the French language expresses his own criticism of Hölderlin's "adorable blue," which he had reduced to "das Blech"; and, like Reverdy, Ponge "fiercely goes after this transparent pivot to which the surrounding world adheres through reflections that make it visible. . . . [Ponge] patiently pushes away the poetic inspirations that might *be deluding* since they aim only to appease his thirst"; and Ponge's evocation of the decay of the French language seeks to flush out language's collusion with a poetic mechanism "that he is unable to elude."[80] Both Francis Ponge and André du Bouchet see that the corruption of language and poetry lies in its will to exchange poetry's will-to-meaning for the thing said; to say, for instance, that the hut in "Todtnauberg" really is Heidegger's mountain dwelling. But in Celan's poem the "thing" to be said remains unknown. It presents only an undecided will-to-meaning that both du Bouchet and Ponge exacerbate. As such,

du Bouchet's translation and reading of "Todtnauberg" does not so much recount a poet's failed encounter with a philosopher, as it tells of the journey of the lines of a poem toward another, and in the name of another. As Celan suggested in "Le Méridien," poetry strives to speak: "as though it were *in the name of another*, who knows, perhaps in the name of the *completely other*," and the poem becomes "a dialogue—often it is a desperate dialogue."[81] Du Bouchet's poetry follows this endless ("halb- / beschrittenen") path that would be unthinkable without the page's inhuman support. In *L'Incohérence*, for instance: "Le support sans lequel je ne pourrais pas poursuivre, inhume . . . / (mots ou hommes oblitérés, lorsque leur support inhumain, s'étant fait jour, achève—mots ou hommes—à nouveau traversée)" [The support without which I could not go on, inhumes . . . / (words or men obliterated, when their inhuman support, having come to light, finishes—words or men—traversal again] (np). Only through or on the page as support is there the possibility for the subject to go further, but this page also inhumes or buries this subjectivity, as in *Une Tache* (1988), in which the spaces between words on the page bury or inter consciousness beneath the *différance* of writing, beneath the written traces of consciousness: "espacer—comme enterrer" [spacing—like burying].[82] The page inhumes or buries the self, but does so for the sake of there being something that one might call, rightly or wrongly, a self.

André du Bouchet concluded his "Tübingen, le 22 mai, 1986" by citing Celan's poem "Ihn Ritt die Nacht": "Es ist, es ist, als stünden im Liguster die Orangen," which he had translated, in . . . *désaccordée comme par la neige*, as "Comme si dans le troène mûrissait les oranges" [As though oranges ripened in the privet] (93).[83] Du Bouchet also recalled that this verse might have been related to something seen through a window "dans le troène entrevu un jour par la fenêtre de la chambre de relégation . . . où le monde est momentanément, comme à jamais, à l'envers, des déchets et des pelures d'oranges demeurés suspendus. qui, dans le poème, seront redevenus, parmi les jets de la plante étrangère qui les a supportés, fruits, fruits mûrs. fruits de la parole: fructifiant, détritus et futur" [in the privet glimpsed one day from the window of the room of relegation . . . when the world is momentarily, as though forever, upside down, waste and peels from an orange remained suspended. which, in the poem, will have become again,

among the shoots of the foreign plant that supported them, fruits of words: fructifying, refuse and future] (88–89). Outside the window or, rather, in its frame, there is no figure. The strange support of the privet for the orange rind is also the poem's page supporting the poet's words; words that are both "refuse and future": "'*Es ist*': deux fois" and "Ce n'est rien! j'y suis! j'y suis toujours": "deux fois, pour que dans la conjugaison de la langue l'unique—être comme chose—l'ayant rompue, et infirmant l'humanité de la parole du poème, silencieusement trouve place entre deux mots confondus presque aussitôt" [two times, so that the conjugation of the unique language—being as thing—having broken it, and invalidating the humanity of the poem's words, silently finds its place between two words merged almost immediately] (67). What intervenes is the nullity of a support, the "null sign" of the open ("l'ouvert"), and the empty ("le vide") that bursts apart their conjugation. This passage also refers to the final verse of Rimbaud's poem "Qu'est-ce pour nous, mon cœur, que les nappes de sang" [What is it for us, my heart, the sheets of blood], which concludes: "Ce n'est rien! j'y suis! j'y suis toujours" [It is nothing! I am there! I am always there!].[84] The repetition of "J'y suis, j'y suis toujours" pronounces the rupture of the singular self in a singular place. The conjugation ("j'y suis, j'y suis") is split and nullifed by the unique ("être comme chose"), yet the unique can take place only in its momentary conjugation. It takes its place as the limit of the human. This nullity pronounces itself in the moment when du Bouchet's poetry operates what Celan, in "Le Méridien," named the "departure from the human" [sortie hors de l'humain] into an exterior realm that is "simultaneously turned toward the human, and such that the human feels out of place." To which André du Bouchet seems to reply in *Rapides*: "inhumain—humain deux fois, plutôt / . . . deux fois. et, pour l'avoir été deux fois, séparé / un instant de l'humain" [inhuman—human twice, rather / . . . twice. and for having been so twice, separated / for an instant from the human] (np). The repetition of "j'y suis, j'y suis" also refers to the final parenthetical verse of Paul Celan's poem "Tübingen, Jänner": "(Pallaksch, Pallaksch)."[85] As du Bouchet suggested in "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986," this expression is "en deux elle-même, pour ouvrir, la parole, finalement, de la parenthèse du poème" [in two itself, to open, words, finally, of the poem's parenthesis] (68). It is also

"hors de toute langue à première vue reconnaissable—pour le oui aussi bien que pour le non. deux fois" [outside of any tongue at first glance recognizable—for the yes as well as for the no. two times] (68). At first reading, the words "Pallaksch, Pallaksch" are neither comprehensible nor incomprehensible. They are inhuman words, words that touch something other than language: "touchant à autre chose qu'à la langue—pour dire à la fois—oui et non—que je n'y suis pas et que j'y suis" [touching something other than language—to say at the same time—yes and no—that I am not there and that I am there] (69).[86]

If repetitions such as "Pallaksch, Pallaksch" are words, then they are aimless, forgetful words on a plane without interior or exterior that find no object for what they "mean-to-say" or, rather, they become objectless words, pure will-to-meaning emanating from the point where the poem's humanity verges on the inhuman and the unique. As du Bouchet wrote in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui": "Il n'y a plus lieu de nous arrêter, nous ne le pouvons plus, nous ne le voulons pas, nous rentrons aussi, nous rentrons—où le silence peut-être se laissera percevoir comme chose compacte—dehors, comme ici, et chacun, nous serons arrivés, sur la cassure de la halte qui n'est pas une interruption" [It would be out of place to stop, we no longer can, we no longer want to, we enter also, we enter—where silence might let itself be perceived as a compact thing—the exterior, as here, and each one, we will have arrived, on the break of the halt which is not an interruption] (169–70). Poetry, as du Bouchet stated in *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous,* leads consciousness to where: "toute profondeur se fait jour par une face qui la soutient" [all depth comes to light through a face that supports it] (16), be it canvas, paper, or air. As *Pourquoi si calmes* (1996) and indeed all of his writings demonstrate, du Bouchet could hardly agree with Heidegger's claim that poetry is the creative, though subserviently so, "foundation that supports history."[87] Rather than the deep foundation of history, poetry brings the depth of our historical consciousness of the world to the surface that supports it. The story is on the pages of books, "these books," without origin or end, *as though oranges ripened in the privet*; that is all.

Appendix A

LA DÉRISION, LA HONTE MÊME D'ÊTRE POÈTE, NULLE SOCIÉTÉ PLUS que la nôtre ne l'a refoulée dans des déserts appropriés, à l'écart des techniques qui ont fait de l'homme cet être soulevé de terre, étranger à son souffle, séparé de sa vie. Niant la fatalité de ce glissement résigné, le poète n'a d'autre prétention que de *gravir*, de gravir coûte que coûte, même si l'âpre sentier ne conduit nulle part, ou à quelque éperon de granit battu de vent et d'infini. Epris du versant obscur de toute montagne ou d'aucune, il se soucie peu du sommet pourvu qu'il soit l'inaccessible.

Le poète n'est fidèle à la parole reçue qu'à la condition de l'accroître, puis de la perdre, avant d'être à son tour reconnu et rejeté par elle. La communication qui s'établit de l'un à l'autre, même si le second nommé s'ajoute à d'autres, n'est qu'un échange par défaut, par excès, un malentendu essentiel. Le poème ne poursuit d'autre fin que son partage incandescent, mais en l'absence du poète. Aussi ce qui engage celui-ci dans son devenir et son expérience, ce qui l'enchaîne, ce qu'il ne peut nommer, à la fin le chasse du lieu de son tourment, fait éclater son nom et parle avec sa voix.

[The derision, the shame even of being a poet, no society more than our own has driven him back into suitable deserts, away from techniques that have made of man this being lifted up off the ground, a stranger to his own breath, separated from his life. Refusing to resignedly slip away as though by fate, the poet has no other pretension than to *climb*, to climb no matter what, even if the harsh path leads nowhere, or to some granite outcrop whipped by the wind and the infinite. Enamored with the obscure side of any and of no mountain, he has little care for the summit as long as it is inaccessible.

The poet is loyal to the words he receives only on the condition of amplifying them, then of losing them before being in turn recognized and rejected by them. The communication established

between one and the other, even if the latter is joined by others, is only exchange by default, through excess, and an essential misunderstanding. The poem does not pursue any other goal than its incandescent sharing, but in the absence of the poet. Thus, what engages the poet in his becoming and his experience, what binds him, what he cannot name, finally chases him away from the place of his torment, explodes his name, and speaks with his voice.]

—Jacques Dupin, "La Dérision, la honte même d'être poète," prière d'insérer, *Gravir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1963), np.

Appendix B

EN BLEU ADORABLE FLEURIT
le toit de métal du clocher. Alentour plane un cri d'hirondelles,
autour s'étend le bleu le plus mouvant. Le soleil
au-dessus est très haut et colore la tôle,
mais calme dans le vent là-haut chante la
girouette. Quand quelqu'un
alors au-dessous de la cloche descend ces degrés, c'est une nature morte, car
lorsque le corps se dessine avec autant de netteté,
l'homme apparaît malléable.
Les fenêtres d'où tintent les cloches sont
comme des portes sur la beauté.
Si simples sont les images, celles-ci tellement sacrées, que souvent on a réellement peur
de les décrire. . . .

[In lieblicher Bläue blühet mit dem
Metallenen Dache der Kirchturm. Den
Umschwebet Geschrei von Schwalben, den
Umgiebt die rührendste Bläue. Die Sonne
Geht hoch darüber und färbet das Blech,
Im Winde aber oben stille
Krähet die Fahne. Wenn einer
Unter der Glocke dann herabgeht, jene Treppen,
Ein stilles Leben ist es, weil,
Wenn abgesondert so sehr die Gestalt ist, die
Bildsamkeit herauskommt dann des Menschen.
Die Fenster, daraus die Glocken tönen,
Sind wie Thore an Schönheit.
So sehr einfältig die Bilder, so sehr
Heilig sind die, dass man wirklich
Oft fürchtet, die zu beschreiben . . .]

Appendix C

Todtnauberg	*Todtnauberg*	*Todtnauberg*
Arnika, Augentrost, der Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem Sternwürfel drauf,	Arnica, luminet, cette gorgée du puits au cube étoilé plus haut du dé,	Arnika, eyebright, the draft from the well with the starred die above it,
in der Hütte,	dans la hutte,	in the hut,
die in das Buch —wessen Namen nahms auf vor dem meinein?—, die in dies Buch geschriebene Zeile von einer Hoffnung, heute, auf eines Denkenden kommendes Wort im Herzen,	là dans un livre, —les noms, de qui, relevés avant le mien?— là dans un livre, lignes qui inscrivent une attente, aujourd'hui, de qui méditera (à venir, in- cessamment venir) un mot du cœur	the line —whose name did the book register before mine?—, the line inscribed in that book about a hope, today, of a thinking man's coming word in the heart,
Waldwasen, uneingeebnet, Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,	humus des bois, jamais aplani, orchis, orchis, unique,	woodland sward, unlevelled, orchid and orchid, single
Krudes, später, im Fahren, deutlich,	chose crue, plus tard, chemin faisant, claire,	coarse stuff, later, clear in passing,
der uns fährt, der Mensch, der's mit anhört,	qui nous voitura, l'homme, lui-même à son écoute,	he who drives us, the man, who listens in,
die halb- beschrittenen Knüppel- pfade im Hochmoor, Feuchtes, viel.	à moitié frayé le layon de rondins là-haut dans le marais, humide, oui.	the half- trodden wretched tracks through the high moors, dampness, much.

Notes

Introduction

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. André Breton, "Prologomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non," in *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1991), 155–56.

2. Jacques Dupin, "Absence de la poésie?", published response to a questionnaire in *Le Débat* 54 (March–April 1989): 179. The designation "poets of *L'Ephémère*" refers to the poet-editors Yves Bonnefoy, Jacques Dupin, Louis-René des Forêts, and André du Bouchet, who, along with Gaëtan Picon, Michel Leiris, and Paul Celan (until his death in 1970) edited the journal *L'Ephémère* (1966–1972). According to Jacques Dupin, Gaëtan Picon and Yves Bonnefoy approached him at the Galerie Maeght in 1965. They proposed launching a journal to continue the tradition of the *Mercure de France,* which had ceased publication in the same year. In the fall of 1972, publication of *L'Ephémère* was discontinued.

3. Tristan Tzara, "Manifeste Dada 1918," *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 1: 361.

4. André Breton, *Déclaration du 27 janvier 1925*, in *Histoire du surréalisme*, by Maurice Nadeau (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), 72.

5. Jean Paris, ed., foreword to *Anthologie de la poésie nouvelle* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 1956), 16. This anthology contains poems by Jacques Dupin and André du Bouchet.

6. Pierre Reverdy, "Circonstances de la poésie," *L'Arche* 21 (November 1946): 9.

7. Alain Bosquet, ed., foreword to *La Poésie française depuis 1950: Une Anthologie* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1979), 9.

8. Serge Brindeau, ed., foreword to *La Poésie contemporaine de la langue française depuis 1945* (Paris: Editions St. Germain-des-Près, 1973), 13.

9. V. A. La Charité, ed., foreword to *Twentieth-Century French Avant-Garde Poetry, 1907–1990* (Louisville, KY: French Forum, 1992), 16.

10. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (New York: Verso Editions, 1987), 55.

11. Yves Bonnefoy, "Une Poète parle: 'Je ne publie pas pour être lu,' " *Tribune de Lausanne*, 14 February 1965.

12. Ibid.

13. Yves Bonnefoy, "La Poésie et la société contemporaine," *Revue des sciences morales et politiques* 4 (1988): 473.

14. Jean-Pierre Richard, *Onze études sur la poésie moderne* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964). The studies are of the following poets: Pierre Reverdy, Saint-John Perse, René Char, Paul Eluard, Georges Schehadé, Francis Ponge, Guillevic, Yves Bonnefoy, André du Bouchet, Philippe Jacottet, and Jacques Dupin.

15. Theodor W. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes on Literature I*, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 43. Adorno was specifically criticizing Martin Heidegger's reflections on poetry, first translated into French in 1938: *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique? Suivi d'extraits sur l'être et d'une conférence sur Hölderlin*, trans. Henri Corbin (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1938). In 1957, Jean Beaufret translated Heidegger's letter *Über den humanismus* as *Lettre sur l'humanisme* (Paris: Aubier, 1957); one year later he began publishing translations of Heidegger's essays on poetry in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (January–February 1958). The impasse between semiological and hermeneutical or ontological readings of poetry is central to Paul Ricœur's essay "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology," in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974); and to Paul de Man's "Lyric Voice in Contemporary Theory," in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

16. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Le Vestige de l'art" (paper presented at the *Jeu de paume*, Paris, 20 October 1992). See also Winfried Menninghaus, "Science des seuils: La Théorie du mythe chez Walter Benjamin," in *Walter Benjamin et Paris* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986), 529–57.

17. Paul Celan, "Le Méridien," trans. André du Bouchet, *L'Ephémère* 1 (1966), 20; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

18. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta (figures de Wagner)* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1991), 230. In light of Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of the impossibility of art, Adorno's often misquoted pronouncement in "Cultural Criticism and Society" needs to be reread: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today." T. W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 34. Adorno's dialectic is such that the term "impossibility" cannot be equated with the end of poetry. Rather, as he wrote in "Spengler after the Decline," the postwar impossibility of poetry and culture must be understood in terms of culture's inherent barbarism: "it is the barbaric element in culture itself which must be recognized." Adorno, *Prisms*, 71.

19. Jacques Depreux, *André du Bouchet; ou, La Parole traversée* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1988), 135.

20. Ibid.

21. See Robert W. Greene, "André du Bouchet and Jacques Dupin, Poets of *L'Ephémère*," *French Forum* 1 (1976): 49–67.

22. Suzanne Guerlac, *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

23. Yves Bonnefoy, *Alberto Giacometti: Biographie d'une œuvre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 169.

24. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), 2: 793.

25. Yves Bonnefoy, "A la recherche de la présence," in *Que peut la poésie* (Paris: Kadamasha, 1983), 29.

26. Louis-René des Forêts, *Ostinato* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1997); subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

27. Michel Leiris, *Le Ruban au cou d'Olympia* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1981), 171.

28. Louis-René des Forêts, "Les Lectures de Louis-René des Forêts," interview by Jean-Pierre Salgas, *La Quinzaine littéraire* 410 (1–15 February 1984): 13.

29. Jacques Dupin, *L'Espace autrement dit* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1982), 116.

30. André du Bouchet, *Des "Hauts-de-Bühl"* (Paris: Fourbis, 1989), np. Throughout this study, the French words "parole" and the plural "paroles" have been consistently translated as "words."

31. Yves Bonnefoy, *Le Nuage rouge* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1977), 216.

32. André du Bouchet, ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," *L'Ephémère* 14 (summer 1970): 170.

33. Jacques Dupin, *"L'Embrasure" précédé de "Gravir"* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1971), 133.

34. Du Bouchet, "Hölderlin," 167.

Chapter 1: Yves Bonnefoy and the Absence of Myth

1. Yves Bonnefoy, *Mythologies*, trans. G. Honigsblum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), VIII; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text; originally published as *Dictionnaire des mythologies et des religions des sociétés traditionnelles et du monde antique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981).

2. For further consideration of the reduction of myth to fable, see Jean Starobinski, "Le Mythe au XVIIIe siècle," *Critique* 366 (November 1977): 975–97.

3. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 205; originally published as *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1974).

4. Ibid. Vernant's reference is to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 1074b.

5. André Breton, ed., *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Maeght, 1947).

6. Yves Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1990), 79.

7. Dupin, "Absence de la poésie," *Le Débat* 54 (March–April 1989): 179.

8. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 70.

9. Georges Bataille, "Le Sens moral de la sociologie," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 11 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1988), 57–58.

10. André Breton, "Limites non-frontières du surréalisme," in *La Clé des champs* (Paris: Pauvert, 1967), 23–24. André Breton comments on the madness running through Hyppolite Taine's positivism in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1965), 14–15.

11. Ernest Renan, *Nouvelles Études d'histoire religieuse*, in *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1947), 7: 742.

12. Baudelaire, *Œuvres*, 2: 140.

13. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Les Dieux antiques: Nouvelle Mythologie d'après George W. Cox et les travaux de la science moderne* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1925), 281–82. The conception of myth evinced by Baudelaire and Mallarmé was certainly not limited to France. In Germany, Wagner wrote: "myth is the primitive and anonymous poem of a people"; Richard Wagner, *Lettre sur la musique* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1976), 190. Nietzsche suggested that "only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement"; Friedrich Nietzsche, *"The Birth of Tragedy" and "The Case of Wagner,"* trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 135. For Schelling, the end goal of poetry is to become "what it was at its beginning—*the educator of mankind*; for there no longer is any philosophy nor any history, poetry alone will outlive all the other sciences. . . . Ideas, as long as we have not made them esthetic, which is to say mythological, have no interest for the *people*," and he concluded that a "superior spirit, sent form the sky, must found a new religion amongst us, it will be the last and the greatest work of mankind"; Friedrich Schelling, in *L'Absolu Littéraire* by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), 54. Philological and romantic notions of myth during the nineteenth century find their origins in eighteenth-century allegorical interpretations. On this aspect of the history of myth, see Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé: Poésie, mythologie, religion* (Paris: José Corti, 1988), 104–12.

14. Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*, 1: 537.

15. For Jean-Pierre Vernant, myth understood as a paradigm constitutes "the model of reference that allows one to situate, to understand, and to judge the exploit celebrated in song. It is in their refraction through the legendary adventures of the heroes or gods that human actions, thought of in terms of the category of imitation, can reveal their meaning and be situated on the scale of values." Vernant, *Mythe et société*, 205. See also Michel Maffesoli, "Mythe, quotidien et épistémologie," in *Le Mythe et le mythique* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1987), 91–101.

16. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 1: 536. My reading of Bataille's understanding of myth is far removed from Michael Richardson's sense that Bataille proposes the need to "reinvent a myth." Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille* (London: Routledge, 1994), 129. Such a reading fails to point out that the critical divide between Bataille and surrealism was centered on the implications of myth's necessity, and on a critical appraisal of our need for myths.

17. Breton, "Prologomènes," 155–56.

18. Breton, *Clé*, 113.

19. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 11: 64.

20. Breton, *Clé*, 114.

21. Yves Bonnefoy, "Donner à vivre," in *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, 66.

22. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 89. The significance of Bonnefoy's persistent return to his early writings is highlighted by his own remarks, during a conference entitled "Mallarmé et ses héritiers," Collège de France, Paris, (25 November 1991), regarding the twenty-two year old Mallarmé's "Symphonie littéraire" (1864): "There is nothing more important than to pay attention to the first publications of a poet." It seems Bonnefoy may also have been referring to himself, and to such essays as "L'Eclairage objectif," written when he was twenty-three. In chapter 4, regarding André du Bouchet, we will consider more closely the question of poetry's "term."

23. In the second and last issue of *La Révolution, la nuit*, Bonnefoy wrote: "I call SURREALISM the art of setting fire to this house [of thought], and of recognizing oneself in its flames." The title of this journal is an homage to Breton's

La Révolution surréaliste, to *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, and to Max Ernst's identically titled painting.

24. Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1951), 128.

25. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 11: 20.

26. Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Eclairage objectif," *Les deux sœurs* 3 (1946): 43; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

27. Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1972), 248–49.

28. André Breton, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, vol. 1 of *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Eitions Gallimard, 1988), 781.

29. The notion of poetry as a bomb or as a lethal force is a commonplace that is hardly unique to Bonnefoy and to surrealism. As Jean-Paul Sartre noted, Mallarmé's entire *Poésies* are marked by the first word of the first poem: "rien" [nothing], and by what he calls "terrorism of politeness." Jean-Paul Sartre, "Mallarmé," preface to *Poésies*, by Stéphane Mallarmé (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945), 5. Around the time of Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto*, Francis Ponge had also begun to write poems to which he later referred as having the form of bombs. Francis Ponge, *Entretiens de Francis Ponge avec Philippe Sollers* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970), 68.

30. Roger Caillois, "Le Surréalisme comme univers de signe," in *"Obliques" précédé de "Images, Images"* (Editions Stock, 1975), 236.

31. The arcane refers to André Breton's *Arcane 17* (New York: Brentano's, 1944). Arthur Rimbaud renounced his ability to recreate the world through imagination and through the hallucinations of poetry. He renounced his own stated desire for this creative power in the poem "Voyelles," and the desire to create an alphabet in which each vowel might synesthetically evoke a different color. The revolutionary violence that "L'Éclairage objectif" attributes to myth is similar to Georges Sorel's understanding of myth in 1908: "Our present-day myths lead men to prepare themselves for a battle to destroy what exists." Georges Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* (1908; reprint, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), 29–30. For further consideration of the underlying political dimension of the aesthetic, see Vincent Descombes, "Philosophie de la révolution française," in *Philosophies par gros temps* (Paris: Les Editions de minuit, 1989), 29–50.

32. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 1: 219. Bonnefoy's surrealist collection of poems entitled *Anti-Platon* (1947) uses this strategy of short-circuiting the logic of mimesis: "Il s'agit bien de *cet* objet: tête de cheval plus grande que nature où s'incruste toute une ville. . . . Il s'agit bien de *cet* objet: la tête en cire d'une femme tournant échevelée sur le plateau d'un phonographe" [It is about *this* object: a horse's head larger than life encrusted with a whole city. . . . It is about *this* object: the wax head of a disheveled woman spinning on the turntable of the phonograph]. Yves Bonnefoy, *Anti-Platon*, in *Poèmes (1947–1975)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1978), 11.

33. Pierre Naville, *La Révolution et les intellectuels* (1926; reprint, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975), 88.

34. Breton, *Clé*, 123; 142–43. Years later, in 1989, Bonnefoy referred to André Breton as one of the "heirs to ancient gnoses." Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 159. Bataille reacted with disbelief to Breton's newfound sobriety. See Bataille, "La Poésie et la tentation de la fin du monde," in *Œuvres*, 11: 406; originally appeared in *Critique* 33 (February 1949): 178.

35. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 248.

36. Yves Bonnefoy, *Arthur Rimbaud* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961), 53. In referring to "l'esthétisme 'artiste'," Bonnefoy was also alluding to Rimbaud's equivocal appraisal of Baudelaire as "the first seer, king of poets, *a real God*. And yet he lived in too artistic a world." Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 253.

37. Bonnefoy, *Poète parle*.

38. In the same work Bonnefoy also wrote: "From within history, the displacement, the tendril, the thaw"; ibid., 44.

39. Breton, "*Prologomènes*," 161–62. Breton's influence over the young Bonnefoy is witnessed by the fact that the latter revised "Donner à vivre" after having received a letter from Breton, who expressed his displeasure with what he took to be Bonnefoy's criticism of surrealism. See Florence de Lussy, *Yves Bonnefoy: Livres et documents* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale / Mercure de France, 1992), 49.

40. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 11: 274.

41. Breton, *Clé*, 110–11.

42. Undine, the water nymph without a soul, is the prominent mythological figure in Breton's *Arcane 17*. When Undine married a mortal she did receive a soul and, with it, the gift or curse of mortality.

43. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 11: 260. Bataille's use of the expression "tout le tremblement du sacré" plays on the French colloquialism "tout le tremblement," which can also mean "all the trappings."

44. Ibid., 274.

45. Yves Bonnefoy, *L'Improbable* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1959) 43; 40; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

46. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 3: 522.

47. Ibid., 11: 22.

48. Ibid., 1: 645–46.

49. Yves Bonnefoy, *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*, in *Poèmes (1947–1975)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1978), 60; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

50. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 19.

51. See Adorno, *Prisms*, 29.

52. John E. Jackson, *Question du Sujet: Un Aspect de la modernité poétique européenne: T. S. Eliot, Paul Celan, Yves Bonnefoy* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: La Baconnière, 1978), 248.

53. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 63.

54. Yves Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: La Baconnière, 1982), 146–47.

55. Breton, *Œuvres*, 338.

56. See André du Bouchet, "Image à terme," *Cahiers GLM 2* (fall 1954): 51–55.

57. Yves Bonnefoy, "Yves Bonnefoy; ou, L'Acte de dégager la présence dans l'absence," interview by G. Piroué, *Mercure de France* (June 1958): 367.

58. Ibid., 366.

59. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens*, 99.

60. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945), 368; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

61. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens*, 100.
62. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 81.
63. Plotinus, "Against Gnostics," in *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 125.
64. Bataille, *Œuvres*, 7: 394–95.
65. John T. Naughton, *The Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 79.
66. Jackson, *Question du sujet*, 263.
67. Michèle Finck, *Yves Bonnefoy: Le Simple et le sens* (Paris: José Corti, 1989), 61.
68. Joachim du Bellay's *L'Olive* and Maurice Scève's *Délie*. Michèle Finck's reading of *Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* is based on the following sentence from E. M. Cioran: "The activity of a civilization during these fertile moments consists in forcing ideas out of their abstract void, in transforming concepts into myths." E. M. Cioran, *Précis de décomposition* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984), 159. Such a conception of myth is far removed from Bonnefoy's reflection on myth and conceptual thought.
69. Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, vols. 1–2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 571. The German reads: "Es geht hier um Auflösung der 'Mythologie' in den Geschichtsraum."
70. Georges Bataille, *L'Absence de mythe*, in *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, 65.
71. Bonnefoy's poetry is thus not "a speaking (*un dire*) directed toward another"; Richard Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling: Representations of Death and Absence in Modern French Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 138. Rather, it is the question of the possibility of this "*dire*."
72. Maurice Blanchot, "Comment découvrir l'obscur," in *L'Entretien infini* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1969), 65.
73. Yves Bonnefoy, *Hier régnant désert*, in *Poèmes (1947–1975)*, 114; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.
74. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1955), 114.
75. Maurice Blanchot, "Le Grand refus," in *L'Entretien infini*, 47.
76. Blanchot, "Comment découvrir," 64.
77. Baudelaire, *Œuvres*, 1: 90; subsequent quotations from this volume are cited parenthetically in the text.
78. Maurice Blanchot, *La Part du feu* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1949), 148.
79. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 142.
80. Blanchot, *Part du feu*, 312.
81. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 42.
82. Blanchot, *Part du feu*, 313.
83. Blanchot, "Grand Refus," 49.
84. Ibid., 50.
85. Yves Bonnefoy, "Georges Henein," in *Hommage à Georges Henein* (Le Caire: La Part du Sable, 1974), 35.
86. Yves Bonnefoy, *Miró* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1964), 20; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.
87. Breton, *Œuvres*, 1020.
88. Yves Bonnefoy, *Un rêve fait à Mantoue*, in *"L'Improbable" suivi de "Un rêve fait à Mantoue"* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1980), 303; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

89. In *Un rêve fait à Mantoue*, Bonnefoy also implicitly referred to Bataille's gnosticism: "Gnostic, in fact, is any being who, in a world of myths that have suddenly been drained of their thunder, of divine ciphers that have become concepts, of presence become objects, has fallen into the trap of skepticism, taking this momentary disaster to be the ultimate proof of nothingness, no longer hoping for help from a God who is too lazy or too withdrawn from our lowly world" (306).
90. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 159–61.
91. Ibid., 16.
92. Gabriele Bruckschlegel, *L'Ephémère: Eine Französische Literaturzeitschrift und ihr poetisches Credo*. Wilhelmsfeld: Gottfried Egert verlag, 1990), 34. The German reads: "Kunst und Leben sollen eine Symbiose miteinander eingehen, sich wechselseitig in einer 'dialectique de l'exister et du livre—l'action et le rêve réconciliés!' befruchten, wie Bonnefoy knapp zwei Jahrhunderte später im Sinn der Romantiker formuliert" (34). Winfried Menninghaus suggests that it was more in terms of Schelling than of Schlegel that "in as much as mythology attributes to poetry, to society, and to philosophy a collective meaning, it was understood as a form of figuration and of interpretation in accordance with ideas and thus as a form of freedom." Winfried Menninghaus, "Science des seuils," 550.
93. Bonnefoy, *Nuage rouge*, 280.
94. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance, 1862–1871*, vol. 1, ed. Henri Mondor, (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1959), 90.
95. Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 90. See Bonnefoy, "Baudelaire parlant à Mallarmé" (1967) in *Entretiens*, 71–94.
96. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens*, 94. "Poetry sacralizes" is from Mallarmé's "L'Action restreinte" (1895), the first section of *Quant au Livre*. Mallarmé, *Œuvres*, 372.
97. Bruckschlegel, *Poetisches Credo*, 64. The German reads: "Wagners Gesamtkunstwerk wird ebenfalls von Baudelaire für Frankreich entdeckt und verteidigt."
98. Finck, *Simple et sens*, 153.
99. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, 88–89.
100. In the poem "Adieu," Rimbaud wrote: "L'automne déjà!—Mais pourquoi regretter un éternel soleil, si nous sommes engagés à la découverte de la clarté divine,—loin des gens qui meurent sur les saisons" [Autumn already!—But why regret an eternal sun, if we are committed to the discovery of divine light—far from those who die with the seasons]. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 116.
101. Bonnefoy, *Arthur Rimbaud*, 130.
102. Yves Bonnefoy, "Le Problème des deux époques," *Connaissances des arts* 478 (December 1991): 66, 70. Bonnefoy was pointedly criticizing Rosalind Krauss's interpretation, inspired by Bataille, of Giacometti's "primitivism." Bonnefoy's position vis-à-vis Giacometti remains a humble assessment. He also noted the importance of Giacometti's destructive work in terms of a negative theology that "implies neither a *tête-à-tête* with God nor conceding defeat and giving up." Bonnefoy, *Giacometti*, 278. See Rosalind Krauss, "Giacometti," in *Primitivism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 503–34.

103. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 108.

104. Raoul Ubac, *Ubac* (Paris: Maeght, 1970), 11.

105. In *L'Improbable* Bonnefoy perceived the return to the "representation" of a head or figure as Giacometti's attempt to inscribe "the simplest realities" (331). Bonnefoy also never evokes a musical aspect in Giacometti's work. In his 1993 monograph *Miró*, Jacques Dupin noted that it was Miró's love of music that distinguished him from André Breton: "Critics have not failed to contrast Miró's acknowledged passion for music with the indifference, even disdain, displayed for it by André Breton." Jacques Dupin, *Miró* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 243. For Miró's remarks on music, see James Johnson Sweeney, "Joan Miró: Comment and Interview with J. J. Sweeney," *Partisan Review* (February 1948).

106. Bonnefoy, *Giacometti*, 193.

107. Yves Bonnefoy, *Dans le leurre du seuil*, in *Poèmes (1947–1975)*, 296; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text

108. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 123. Stamelman suggests Bonnefoy is sensitive to 'the impossible problem of trying to represent in art and in language what in the world is absent, fleeting, lost, and other." Nevertheless, he rapidly proposes that poetry can overcome this impossible problem. He equally hastily proclaims poetry as the privileged site of the "other" (133).

109. Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 23.

110. Bonnefoy, *Giacometti*, 174. Bonnefoy is referring to a letter in which Stéphane Mallarmé opined that mortal beings are mere "vaines formes de la matière, mais bien sublimes pour avoir inventé Dieu et notre âme" [vain forms of matter, but so sublime for having invented God and our soul]. Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, I: 207.

111. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 21.

112. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 144.

113. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 52.

114. Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 279. Mallarmé's "Sonnet en -yx" was earlier entitled "Sonnet allégorique de lui-même," and was written between 1868 and 1887. For Guy Michaud, this sonnet attempts to duplicate what he calls a "cosmic syntax" through a "network of lines at whose intersections one finds only absence: man's absence, the absence of things, the empty frame which are attested to not only through words where all and any image is extinguished, but above all through the juxtapositions and the rhythms whose *effect* is to create emptiness." Guy Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme* (Paris: Nizet, 1951), 185. For Bonnefoy this sonnet gives the impression of "a room devoid of dwellers, of a fire that has gone out in the hearth, of things seen from without, in the *agony* of their form. . . . It is a mirror's reflection that offers only the remains of a world," and in the last verse of the "Sonnet en -yx" he recognized "two admirable diereses that seem to depict the flaw of an emotion in the will to achieve form." Bonnefoy, *Nuage rouge*, 201–2; 269.

115. Marchal, *Religion de Mallarmé*, 89.

116. Bonnefoy, *Nuage rouge*, 185.

117. Yves Bonnefoy, response to a paper given at the colloquium in Pau, France (9–11 May 1983); printed as *Yves Bonnefoy: Poésie, art, et pensée* (Pau: Cahiers de l'Université, 1984), 46–47.

118. Bonnefoy, *Nuage rouge*, 207.

119. Ibid. The eternal garden's disappearance also can be considered in terms of Bataille's "L'Absence de mythe": "today, because a myth is dead or dying, we see more clearly through it than if it were living" (65). For Mallarmé, the presence of chance ("le hasard") implies poetry's failure: "in an act where chance is at stake, it is always chance that accomplishes its own Idea by affirming or denying itself. Before its existence, negation and affirmation run aground" [vienne échouer] (441).

120. Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 220–21.

121. Marchal, *Religion de Mallarmé*, 88.

122. Bonnefoy, *Bissière (1886–1964), Cahiers de L'Abbaye Sainte-Croix* 21 (summer 1977), np.

123. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 104.

124. Bonnefoy, *Nuage rouge*, 206–7.

125. Yves Bonnefoy, *La Vérité de parole* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1988), 14.

126. Yves Bonnefoy, *Ce qui fut sans lumière* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987), 37; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

127. "L'amande de l'absence de la parole" also refers to Bonnefoy's consideration of drawing. In "La Sente étroite vers tout," for instance, Bonnefoy writes: "In painting, drawing is the kernel [amande] of the invisible." Yves Bonnefoy, *Remarques sur le dessin* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1993), 19–20.

Chapter 2. Louis-René des Forêts: Figures of Remembrance

Portions of this chapter previously appeared in *Modern Language Notes*, French Issue. 111:4 (fall 1996).

1. Jacques Rancière, *Les Noms de l'histoire: Essai de poétique du savoir* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992), 8. Rancière's title, *Les Noms de l'histoire*, refers to Aristotle's *Poetics*: "It is not the poet's business to relate actual events, but such things as might or could happen in accordance with probability or necessity . . . the historian relates what happened, the poet what might happen. That is why poetry is more akin to philosophy and is a better thing than history; poetry deals with general truths, history with specific events." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1451b.

2. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1451b.

3. Louis-René des Forêts, *Face à l'immémorable* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1993), 21–22; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

4. Bonnefoy, *Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)*, 99–100.

5. Rancière, *Noms*, 180.

6. Louis-René des Forêts, "Pauses anxieuses, moments sans grâce," *Le Temps qu'il fait* 6–7 (1991): 289; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

7. Leiris, *Ruban*, 171.

8. Louis-René des Forêts, *Voies et détours de la fiction* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1985), 10.

9. See *La Politique des poètes: Pourquoi des poètes en temps de détresse*, ed.

and with a preface by Jacques Rancière (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1992), 9–18.

10. Louis-René des Forêts, *Les Mendiants* (1943; reprint, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1986), 13; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

11. Maurice Blanchot, "L'Influence du roman américain," *Journal des débats* (29 September 1943).

12. Louis-René des Forêts, letter to Roger Vincent, 1943; published as *Lettre sur "Les Mendiants"* (Paris: La Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, 1991), 8. Roger Vincent's review of *Les Mendiants* in 1943 was the first to refer to the subterranean theme in the works of des Forêts: "The novel is built in terms of depth. The author creates as he dives into his narrative. *Les Mendiants* is constructed like an underground." Roger Vincent, "*Les Mendiants*," *Demain* 91 (24 October 1943): 13–14.

13. Ibid., 8.

14. Breton, *Œuvres*, 337. In *Les Paradis artificiels* Baudelaire wrote: "I have already warned the reader, however, that nothing was positively surnatural in the intoxication of hashish; yet these analogies take unusual liveliness; they penetrate, they invade, they overwhelm the mind with their despotic aspect" (419). Both des Forêts and Baudelaire play on our ability to be duped by the cliché of exoticism.

15. Louis-René des Forêts, *Le Bavard* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1946), 12; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text. Des Forêts finished *Le Bavard* after having set it aside in the winter of 1944–45: "I only finished it after the Liberation, [after] other, let us say, clandestine activities" Louis-René des Forêts, "Entretien avec J. B. Puech," *Louis-René des Forêts: Le Temps qu'il fait* 6–7 (1991): 21.

16. For Bonnefoy this passage represents the trace "of a being-toward-language that is entirely different." Bonnefoy, *Vérité de Parole*, 142.

17. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 132–33.

18. Dominique Rabaté, "Parole d'excès, poésie du silence," *Pleine marge* 1 (May 1985): 29.

19. Louis-René des Forêts, "Une mémoire démentielle," in *La Chambre des enfants* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1983), 123–24; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

20. *Ostinato* proposes the same self-destructive images, yet the narrator also doubts the image's power of self-denunciation: "Ces images qui se dressent pour construire et qui retombent sans pouvoir donner forme cohérente à un temps aussi indistinct que les régions les plus reculées de l'enfance. Encore un petit effort. Mais à quoi bon?" [These images that arise to build, and that fall down again without being able to give a coherent form to a time that is as indistinct as the furthest reaches of childhood. One last effort. But for what?] (140).

21. Vincent Kaufmann posits intertextual and intersubjective readings in "Contrats sans paroles," *Texte* 2 (1983): 35–47. Serge Canadas posits a polarity between "fabulaic" and critical discourses in "Louis-René des Forêts: L'Inabordable Question," *Critique* 442 (March 1984): 229–44. Ora Avni distinguishes between the aesthetic realm of the simulacrum and the ontological in "Silence, vérité et lectures dans l'œuvre de Louis-René des Forêts," *MLN* 103, no. 4 (September 1987): 877–97. Yves Bonnefoy posits a dichotomy between lucid and mythological layers of writing in "Une Ecriture de notre temps," in *Vérité de Parole*, 179; 248.

22. Søren Kierkegaard, "In Vino Veritas," in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 31. This passage is the abstract version of the banquet's dramatic end: "A nocturnal party beheld by morning illumination, in the midst of a smiling rustic environment, makes an almost uncanny impression. One begins to think of ghosts which are surprised by the dawn of day, of elves which cannot find the crevice through which they are accustomed to vanish because it is visible only in the dark, of unfortunates for whom the difference between day and night has become obliterated by the monotony of their suffering." Kierkegaard, *Vino Veritas*, 89. These nocturnal figures caught in dawn's first light reveal what Adorno calls "the transparence of decaying figures." Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 131.

23. Kierkegaard, *Vino Veritas*, 27.

24. Ibid., 30.

25. Louis-René des Forêts, "Dans un miroir," in *Chambre des enfants*, 184; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

26. Louis-René des Forêts, "La Chambre des enfants," in *Chambre des enfants*, 66; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

27. Kierkegaard, *Vino Veritas*, 30.

28. Des Forêts, *Lettre*, 8.

29. Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Verso, 1992), 21.

30. Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 22.

31. Pascal Quignard, *Le Vœu du silence* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1985), 59.

32. Louis-René des Forêts, "Les Grands Moments d'un chanteur," in *Chambre des enfants*, 27; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

33. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe suggests that, following his disenchantment with Wagner, Nietzsche quipped: "the beginning of the decline of opera (and of European music) dates from the opening of *Don Giovanni*." Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, 19.

34. The perfume of disaster waiting to jump at the spectators' throat is similar to the *jouissance* experienced by the narrator of Baudelaire's "Assommons les pauvres" after finally being subjected to the punishment he had inflicted. The Bavard also seeks redemption through the thrashing he received in the park.

35. Louis-René des Forêts, "Strawinsky et Webern au Domaine Musical," *Le Temps qu'il fait* 6–7 (1991): 37; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

36. Des Forêts, *Voies et détours*, 9–10.

37. Ibid., 22.

38. Yves Bonnefoy, "Une Écriture de notre temps," in *Vérité de parole*, 123–24; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

39. Baudelaire suggests that Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser* is equally "mobi-

lizing," and capable of endowing flesh with memory: "any flesh that remembers begins to tremble" (795).

40. Bonnefoy does not suggest that des Forêts's writings progress from the aesthetic to the ethical. Rather, he explicitly states that Molieri is no Kierkegaardian knight of faith, and that des Forêts' works elicit the evanescent tangent that both separates and joins ethics and aesthetics.

41. Dominique Rabaté, *Louis-René des Forêts: La Voix et le volume* (Paris: José Corti, 1991), 13.

42. Louis-René des Forêts, *Poèmes de Samuel Wood* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1988), 7; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

43. Louis-René des Forêts, *Les Mégères de la mer* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1967), 18; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

44. Maurice Blanchot, *Une voix venue d'ailleurs, sur les poèmes de Louis-René des Forêts* (Dijon: Cahiers Ulysse fin de siècle, 1992), 34. *Le Bavard* offers a more humorous disavowal of Proustian remembrance: "I wanted to clear up this point once and for all. If it had been necessary, I would have mentally dwelled on my childhood until the next morning" (126). Unlike Marcel, the Bavard would not have gone to bed early.

45. Rabaté, *Voix et volume*, 15.

46. The question of being "duped" parallels the question of a subject "[qui] se donne le change," and is related to Baudelaire's notorious letter to Richard Wagner, in which he writes that, as far as music is concerned, "I have so often been duped" (795).

47. Blanchot, *Voix venue*, 15.

48. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Ecriture du désastre* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1980), 205.

49. Ibid., 204.

50. See Adorno, *Kierkegaard*, 131.

51. The role of image and memory in des Forêts's *Ostinato* parallels that expressed in the following passage from Yves Bonnefoy's *Dans le leurre du seuil*: "Et d'où ce souvenir qui serre le cœur / D'où, oui, tant d'évidence à travers tant / D'énigme, et tant de certitude encore, et même / Tant de joie, préservée? Et pourquoi l'image / Qui n'est pas l'apparence, qui n'est pas / Même le rêve trouble, insiste-t-elle / En dépit du déni de l'être?" [And from where this memory that grips the heart / From where, yes, so much evidence through so much / Enigma, also so much certainty, and even / So much joy, preserved? And why does the image / Which is not the appearance, which is not / Even the hazy dream / Why does it insist / In spite of the denial of being?] (255).

52. This passage from *Ostinato* both criticizes and accepts the dream: "ce rêve dont la répétition est le principe ne prend consistance que pour autant qu'il s'élabore et se maintient hors d'un souci pointilleux de véracité auquel se soumettre reviendrait paradoxalement à se masquer" [this dream whose principle is repetition takes on consistency only insofar as it is elaborated, and that it stays away from overly worrying about veracity, submission to which would paradoxically be the same as hiding] (47).

53. Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 25.

54. In *Les Mendiants*, Hélène is described as "n'essayant plus de *donner le change* ni à Grégoire ni aux autres" [no longer trying to throw Grégoire or any one else off track] (266). The Bavard also repeatedly uses this expression with reference to himself: "Je prétendais . . . me *donner* momentanément *le change*" [I pretended . . . momentarily to throw myself off track] (130–31), and with reference to the reader: "par une fiction savante j'ai cherché à vous *donner le change*" [through a learned fiction I have sought to throw you off track] (156). In "Les Grands Moments d'un chanteur," Molieri is described as having succeeded "*à donner le change* sur l'insuffisance de ses moyens vocaux" [in covering up the shortcomings of his vocal means] (51). In terms of des Forêts's writings, the French reflexive form of the verb "se donner le change" might be the truest form of the gift ("don"): giving to oneself or to another what one does not have oneself.

55. In *Ostinato* des Forêts wrote: "il n'est pas de lieux plus sûrs que la mort et l'oubli" [there is no safer place than death and forgetfulness] (141).

56. Blanchot, *Voix venue*, 29.

57. Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 27.

58. Regarding its necessity, the image does not respond. In *Les Mendiants*, the Stranger exclaims: "Don't ask me about the necessity of all this." This would also be the image's answer, if it could or would answer.

59. Des Forêts' formulation parallels Blanchot's in *L'Espace littéraire*: "To live an event through an image is not to have an image of this event nor to grant it the gratuitousness of the imaginary. The event, in this case, really does take place; yet does it truly take place? What happens takes hold of us, as would the image, that is it releases us, from it and from ourselves. It keeps us outside, and makes of this exterior a presence where 'I' does not recognize itself." Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 357.

Chapter 3. Jacques Dupin: Between Graffiti and Paraphs

1. René Char, "Avant-propos," preface to *Cendrier du voyage*, by Jacques Dupin (Paris: GLM, 1950), 9; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

2. Jean-Pierre Richard, preface to *"L'Embrasure" précédé de "Gravir,"* by Jacques Dupin (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1971), 7–10; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

3. Jacques Dupin, preface to *Le Monde de l'art n'est pas le monde du pardon*, by René Char (Paris: Maeght, 1974), 3.

4. Mallarmé, *Œuvres*, 366. The poet's "disparition élocutoire" does not occur for the sake of the "work's purity."

5. Laurent Jenny, *La Parole singulière* (Paris: Belin, 1990), 133.

6. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 4. The image of the poet being called "before us" and before oneself recurs not only in the poetry of Jacques Dupin, but also, as we will see, in the poetry of André du Bouchet.

7. Jacques Dupin, *Une Apparence de soupirail* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1982), 84; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

8. Blanchot, *Part du feu*, 152.

9. Blanchot, *Espace littéraire*, 308.

10. Richard, *Onze études*, 284.

11. Ibid.

12. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 437.

13. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 129.

14. In *Une apparence de soupirail* Dupin wrote: "Dans la ville. Une ville. Autre. Claire. / Enlacée à la brume, à la mer. / La prendre, la recommencer. La détruire. / Commencer" [In the town. A town. Other. Clear. / Wrapped around the fog, the sea. / To capture it, to start it over. To destroy it. / To start" (46). Consider also a quotation from Hölderlin's *Hyperion* in the preface to Yves Bonnefoy's collection *Hier régnant désert*: "Tu veux un monde Diotima. C'est pourquoi tu as tout, et tu n'as rien" [You want a world Diotima. That is why you have everything, and you have nothing] (115).

15. Jacques Dupin, *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche* (1962; reprint, Paris: Fourbis, 1991), 59; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

16. Years later, in his 1981 preface to Jacques Prévert's *Couleurs*, Dupin suggested that both Prévert and Miró "open breaches in walls, large vistas into the night, immense air holes in the massive heritage." Jacques Dupin, preface to *Couleurs*, by Jacques Prévert (Paris: Maeght, 1981), 18.

17. Jacques Dupin, "Francis Ponge: *L'Araignée*," *Cahiers d'Art* 28, no. 1 (1953): 160. Lost in translation is the play, dear to Ponge and Dupin alike, on the word "soi," which is phonetically identical to "soie" or silk, such as the silken thread that the spider spins out from itself to create its web, its work.

18. Ibid. Dupin also wrote: "The merits of the task Francis Ponge has undertaken are that it offers a way out of the crisis of expression and of conscience that any literature that is even a little bit demanding feels today" (Ibid., 159). Dupin points out as Ponge's success precisely what Ponge himself had highlighted, in 1947, in his criticism of Camus's absurdism: "Yes, here is one of the principal themes of the absurd that my friend Camus did not address in his myth of Sisyphus. He did not address the theme of expression, of the absurdism of expression. In fact, this is really the theme that some in my generation have particularly felt, and lived." Francis Ponge, *Œuvres complètes*, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1999), 660.

19. This emptiness also refers to the distance Giacometti perceived between himself and the prostitutes of the Paris nightclub known as the "Sphinx." See Dupin's reading of Alberto Giacometti's essay "Le Rêve, le sphinx, et la mort de T," in his and Michel Leiris's *Alberto Giacometti: Ecrits* (Paris: Hermann Editeurs, 1990). This essay marks both the artist's and the poet's rejection of Jean-Paul Sartre's interpretation of Giacometti in "Les Peintures de Giacometti," *Critique* 103 (June, 1954): 2221–32.

20. Jacques Dupin, "La Dérision, la honte même d'être poète," insert, *Gravir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1963), np. Given the relative difficulty of finding this text, I have reproduced it in appendix A.

21. Gaëtan Picon, "Situation de la jeune poésie," in *L'Usage de la lecture*, vol. 2 (Paris: Mercure de France, 1961), 203.

22. Jacques Dupin, "Comment dire?" *Empédocle* 2 (May 1949): 93; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

23. Maurice Blanchot, "L'Athéisme et l'écriture, l'humanisme et le cri," *Nouvelle Revue Française* 179 (1 November 1967): 821.

24. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, vol. 1 (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1973), 598–99.

25. Blanchot, *Part du feu*, 248.

26. Edouard Glissant, in Picon, *Usage de la lecture*, 203.

27. Jacques Dupin, *Miró*, 187; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

28. Char, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1983), 632. These poems were later published in the collection *Seuls demeurent* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945).

29. Dupin, *L'Espace autrement dit*, 49; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

30. Jacques Dupin, *Dehors* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975), 26; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

31. Besides referring to Francis Ponge's "Le Soleil placé en abyme," "Le Soleil substitué" is influenced by Maurice Blanchot's conception of the thanatographic and the impersonal in literature. According to Vincent Kaufmann, the purpose of this conception is "to maintain the myth of an impersonal writing, or the development of writing as myth, which would require the transition from 'I' to 'he' (since, by definition, myth excludes first-person discourse)." Vincent Kaufmann, "Morts et résurrection de l'auteur," *Critique* 548–49 (January–February 1993): 115. Though Blanchot's understanding of impersonality in writing may not be quite so mythic, Dupin's early poetry is clearly influenced by Blanchot's penchant for thanatography.

32. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 136.

33. "Fits and starts" is Paul Auster's translation of the French word "saccades." Paul Auster, *Fits and Starts: Selected Poems of Jacques Dupin* (Berkeley: Living Hand, 1973).

34. Jacques Dupin, *Rien encore, tout déjà* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1990), 42; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

35. Jean Launay's translation of "Le Méridien" reads: "Le poème est au fort de lui-même quand il est au-bord de lui-même; c'est de là qu'il appelle, mais il ne peut s'y tenir qu'en s'arrachant sans cesse de son déjà-plus vers son encore." Paul Celan, "Le Méridien," trans. into French J. Launay, *Po&sie* 9 (1979): 68–82.

36. Jacques Dupin, *Echancré* (Paris: P.O.L, 1991), 21; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

37. In *Pourquoi si calmes* (1996), André du Bouchet refers to World War II as "the time of the *debacle* that swept away all anchoring points" [points d'ancrage]. André du Bouchet, *Pourquoi si calmes* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1996), 33.

38. This "point de mire" also appears in Dupin's preface to Jacques Prévert's *Couleurs*, in which he distinguishes between the poet and the artist: "Prévert prepares the fuses that light the fireworks or the fertile explosions. Miró, introverted, applied, ingenuous, with target or focal point [ligne de mire], objectless, simply uncoils the explosive living line that bursts deep within us, at the edge of consciousness and sleep." Prévert, *Couleurs*, 16.

39. Jacques Dupin, *Le grésil* (Paris: P.O.L., 1996), 23; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

40. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 7. For Jean Paris's remarks see introduction p 12.

41. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Guerre, droit, souveraineté—*Techné*," *Les Temps modernes* 539 (June 1991): 36.

42. Ibid.

43. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 175.

44. Richard, *Onze études*, 277.

45. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 7. Dupin's use of the verb "to pulverize" is by way of René Char's *Poèmes pulvérisés*.

46. This poem is a slightly altered version of the original that was published under the title "Le Crible" in *Strophes* 5–8 (February 1966): 36.

47. Jacques Dupin, *L'Eboulement* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977), 23. Dupin has written the argument for a ballet that he entitled *L'Œil-Oiseau*, and that he derived from works by and sketchbooks from Joan Miró. Performed under the title *Ucello Luce* on September 25, 1981, Gran teatro La Fenice, Venice.

48. Jacques Dupin, "L'Irréversible," *L'Ephémère* 6 (May–June 1968): 15.

49. Mario Pezzella, "Image mythique et image dialectique: Remarques sur le *Passagen-Werk*," in *Walter Benjamin et Paris* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1986), 527.

50. Jacques Dupin, "Fragments dans les marges d'un texte de Michel Leiris," *Repères* 10 (1984): 9.

51. Blanchot, *Entretien infini*, 392.

52. Joan Miró, "I Work Like a Gardener," in *Joan Miró, Selected Writings*, ed. M. Rowell (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 252.

53. The overlay of words and images reveals not only a desire to draw upon all forms of inscription, but also a refusal to elevate one art form over another. See François Chapon, *Le Peintre et le livre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987).

54. Stamelman, *Lost Beyond Telling*, 6.

55. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 256.

56. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, trans. D. Farell Krell. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991), 18.

57. De Man, *Blindness*, 256.

58. In "Le Méridien," Paul Celan also refers to this impossible overlay of the natural and of the formal in terms of the dichotomy between a third person impersonal form of mythical writing, and writing based on the first person singular: "Mais, prenons garde: 'On aimerait être une tête de Méduse' . . . afin de saisir le naturel en tant que naturel par le moyen de l'art! *On* aimerait, est-il dit du reste, non pas: *j*'aimerais," *L'Ephémère* 1 (1966): 8.

59. Bonnefoy, *Miró*, 12.

60. Adorno, *Prisms*, 175.

61. Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit*, vol. 3 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985), 273.

62. Ibid.

63. Paul Ricœur, *De l'interprétation, essai sur Freud* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), 27.

64. For Dupin the trace "precedes the sign and contains it, imposes its influence, submerses it again in the subterranean layer where the symbolic function of any language has no access." Jacques Dupin, "Contemplatif dans l'action: Henri Michaux," in *Espace autrement dit*, 277.

65. Jenny, *Parole singulière*, 14–15.

66. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 327.

67. André du Bouchet, "André du Bouchet: Remous," interview by Alain Veinstein, *L'Autre Journal: Les Nouvelles Littéraires* (December 1984): 138. Jenny relates the notion of "tensional residue" to Jean-François Lyotard's commentary of Walter Benjamin: "Lyotard thus enlighteningly brings together the event's irrepresentability—which requires that it be sensorially experienced—and the temporality it makes possible, and that is based on insistence. If the event poses the question of destiny, it is because the future is implicated in it, one we attempt to read. The event holds the secret of the repetition of a disturbance within us, to which even our flesh is submitted, but regarding which we are blind." Jenny, *Parole singulière*, 13. See also Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1986), 142.

68. Ricœur, *Interprétation*, 27.

69. André du Bouchet, *Dans la chaleur vacante (1961) suivi de Ou le soleil (1968)* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1991), 114; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

70. Rancière, *Politique des poètes*, 13.

71. Jacques Dupin, *Chansons troglodytes* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1989), 17; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text. The *Chansons troglodytes* must also be read in light of Dupin's consideration of Miró's own writings (which the painter called "Jeux Poétiques") in the final chapter of *Miró*, significantly entitled "La Peinture, la poésie": "these sentences without punctuation, without beginning or end, their visceral eloquence, and these simultaneously solar and troglodyte songs shake us through the liveliness of the acrid emotion rendered—an emotion reserved in its very development. Removed from the realm of the conceptual, and the appeasement of conventional order" (444).

72. The punctuation of "Fragmes" underscores this syncopation. It should be noted that in their original version, as an hommage to Edmond Jabès, these poems were not punctuated in this manner. During one of our conversations, Jacques Dupin suggested that the use of periods followed by uncapitalized letters embodied the notational (as opposed to the compositional) aspect of the poem; in this Dupin follows Reverdy, who once stated: "I do not think, I note." Pierre Reverdy, cited in Philippe Denis, "Entre deux livres: André du Bouchet," *Critique* 367 (December 1977): 1119.

73. In "Tentative orale" (1947) Francis Ponge suggested that for the poet: "the best is to choose impossible subjects." F. Ponge, *Œuvres*, 667.

74. Michel Leiris, *L'Age d'homme* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1991), 306.

75. Michel Beaujour, "Flight Out of Time: Language and the Revolution," *Yale French Studies* 39 (1967): 31. Dupin's poetry is not synonymous with revolution, and is thus not assimilable to the conception of poetry illustrated in Julia Kristeva's *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974); nor is his poetry a form of what Michel Beaujour called teleological poetry. Rather, it presents the possibility of what Dupin calls a "troglodyte song" that does not simply interrupt some (illusory) absolute political action, but rather attempts to fracture and interrupt an impersonal or anonymous action that has effectively preempted or struck dumb the possibility of what Beaujour called the "ordinary language, pledged to its task of patient, difficult communication." Beaujour, *Flight*, 30.

76. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 4.

77. The choice of George Jackson for this placard is not haphazard. In 1973 George Jackson was something of a *cause célebre* in Paris. Following the questionable circumstances of his death a march was organized in Paris, headed up by such figures as Jean Genet and Jean-Paul Sartre.

78. Dupin's notion of the paraph inverts Jacques Derrida's proposition that "the signature invents the signatory." Jacques Derrida, *Otobiographies* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984), 23. Rather than inventing its signatory, the paraph dissolves it into its anonymous other, which never appears as a commmunal "we."

79. In his monograph *Miró*, regarding the painting entitled *May 68*, Dupin also connects the form of the work of art to its historical context. In this work "the spots, the drippings, the rebellious black lines, and the handprints reveal the event that prompted them" (333).

80. Jenny, *Parole singulière*, 16–18.

81. In "De la littérature considerée comme tauromachie" (1945), Michel Leiris spelled out what is at stake by asking whether he, or any writer, is justified in believing it is valid to attempt to introduce "'even only the shadow of a bull's horn in a literary work.' Can the fact of writing ever entail for the one who makes of it a profession a danger that, if not lethal, is at least positive?" Leiris, *L'Age d'homme*, 14.

82. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 4.

83. Dupin has suggested that "Traille de l'aïeul" was written regarding his grandfather, an accountant who lived in Voulte-sur-Rhône. Such an autobiographical admission does not "resolve" the poem. Rather, it demands that we not forget the risk of producing a biographically overdetermined narrative of the subject of poetry.

84. Dominique Viart points out that the "acephalic" tradition to which Dupin's poetry belongs is not restricted to the thought of Georges Bataille and the journal *Acéphale*. This tradition also refers to Guilllaume Apollinaire's *Zone* ("Soleil cou coupé"), and to Mallarmé's *Cantique de St. Jean*. See Dominique Viart, *L'Ecriture seconde: La Pratique poétique de Jacques Dupin* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1982), 36–40.

85. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 46. "Fruits de la Passion" makes express reference to "le cercueil de Rimbaud" (80).

86. In *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Dupin writes in similar terms of Giacometti's rejection (as of 1946) of the fascination with the deathly exteriority of the human figure: "Examining the face more deeply, making his way through the wall of bones that death has applied to it like a mask, he sees and allows us to see the living depth that inhabits this face. . . . Life arises from death and entrenches itself within it" (54). This last sentence parallels what I have presented as Yves Bonnefoy's criticism of Hegel's proclamation: "But the life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it." Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 19.

Chapter 4. André du Bouchet: The Surfaces of Poetry

1. André du Bouchet, *Pourquoi si calmes* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1996), 23; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

2. Henri Maldiney's conference was published under the title "Naissance de la parole dans la poésie d'André du Bouchet," *Prévue* 3 (May 1993): 69–82.

3. Bonnefoy's poetry is closer to Stanislas Breton's suggestion that the poet "is freed from the meaning of the unique. If he is not hostile to meaning, he is at least more in accord with plural meanings whose coherence he does not have to guarantee in the name of an ontology, no matter how minimal." Stanislas Breton, "Qui est Paul Celan?" *Critique* 550–51 (March–April 1993): 171–72.

4. ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," *L'Ephémère* 14 (summer 1970): 158–70; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text. Du Bouchet also recalled reading the following in the preface to the English edition in which he first read "In lieblicher Bläue": "*Some remarks by Goethe about these translations*—il s'agit des traductions de Sophocle par Hölderlin—*are known, he considered them ludicrous.*" Hölderlin, *Hölderlin: Selected Poems*, trans. and with a preface by Michael Hamburger (1942; reprint; New York: Pantheon Books, 1952), 160. ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui" was reprinted in considerably modified form in the collection entitled *L'Incohérence* (1979).

5. André du Bouchet, "André du Bouchet à la croisée des langues," interview by M. Petillon, *Le Monde des livres* (10 June 1983): 19.

6. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 229. Heidegger quotes the following verses from Hölderlin: "So lange die Freundlichkeit / Am Herzen, die Reine, dauert, misset / Nicht unglüklich der Mensch sich / Mit der Gottheit" [As long as Kindness, / The Pure, still stays with his heart, man / Not unhappily measures himself / Against the Godhead].

7. Ibid., 226.

8. See Paul de Man, "Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin," in *Blindness*, 246–66.

9. Jean-Luc Marion, *L'Idole et la distance* (Paris: Editions Grasset, 1977), 121.

10. Ibid.

11. Heidegger, *Poetry*, 220.

12. Richard, *Onze études*, 475.

13. Hédi Kaddour, "Le Bancal aujourd'hui: André du Bouchet," *Nouvelle Revue Française* 446 (March, 1990): 79.

14. *Ibid.*, 70.

15. For reception of this debate in the United States see Mark M. Anderson, "The *'Impossibility of Poetry'*: Celan and Heidegger in France," *New German Critique* 53 (spring–summer 1991): 5–18.

16. André du Bouchet, "Alphabet-Incendie"; "Et le reste à l'avenant"; "Lions"; "Vent"; "Un Hiver"; "Mer"; and "Départ"; in *Les Temps modernes* 39 (February 1949): 279–86. These early poems conflate the means of poetic expression ("alphabet") with the destruction of these same means ("incendie"). A similar impulse toward destruction can be read in the poem "Et le reste à l'avenant": "Je brule les étapes de la raison" [I burn the stages of reason].

17. André du Bouchet, "Fureur et mystère," *Les Temps modernes* 42 (April 1949): 745; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

18. In the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), Breton describes surrealism as capable of "ushering you into death, which is a *secret society*." Breton, *Œuvres*, 334.

19. Ibid., 333.

20. In "Fureur et mystère" du Bouchet suggests that Char's poetry "rectifies rather than anihilating" (748).

21. Yves Bonnefoy, "La Poésie d'André du Bouchet," *Critique* 179 (April 1962): 292.

22. *Ibid.*

23. André du Bouchet, *"Air" suivi de "Defets": 1950–1953* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1986), 23; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

24. "Envergure de Reverdy," *Critique* 47 (April 1951): 315; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text. Du Bouchet was referring to Breton's qualified acceptance, in the first *Surrealist Manifesto*, of Reverdy's theory that images are created through willfully joining two "distant realities." Breton disagrees with Reverdy's suggestion that images remain subjected to the human will. For Breton images are the "despots" of the human will; a belief Louis-René des Forêts criticized as early as *Les Mendiants*.

25. Breton, *Œuvres*, 781.

26. Du Bouchet was in fact referring to Giambattista Vico's dictum "fingut simul creduntque" [(men) no sooner imagine than they believe]. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. T. G. Bergin and M. Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 129–30.

27. André du Bouchet, *Sans couvercle* (Paris: GLM, 1953), 45–46.

28. André du Bouchet, *Le Moteur blanc* (Paris: GLM, 1956). Republished in *"Dans la chaleur vacante" (1961) suivi de "Ou le soleil" (1968)*, 59; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

29. André du Bouchet, "Ce que la lampe a brulé" *GLM* (summer 1954): 22.

30. During a conversation in June 1998, André du Bouchet made a point of telling me that he had not been familiar with the writings of Martin Heidegger during the 1950s. He later read Heidegger, but again insisted on his distance from the German philosopher's writings. Du Bouchet suggested, not without irony, that any parallels must have been due, in his words, to "quelque chose dans l'air."

31. Given the importance of the image of the road and of paths in du Bouchet's poetry, I have chosen to translate the French adjective "déroutée" as "rerouted," which is a variant of short-circuiting the image's function. With regards to du Bouchet's consideration of Reverdy and his interest in depreciating the value of the image, the secondary meaning of "déroutée" as "disconcerted" is equally crucial.

32. Du Bouchet, "Croisée des langues," 19.

33. André du Bouchet, *L'Incohérence* (Paris: Hachette, 1979), np; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

34. Du Bouchet, "Croisée des langues," 19.

35. André du Bouchet, "Baudelaire irrémédiable," *Courrier du centre internationale d'études poétiques* 9 (May 1956): 3; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

36. See Benjamin Fondane, *Baudelaire et l'expérience du gouffre* (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1947). In *Ici en deux* (1986), André du Bouchet offers a verse version of Baudelaire's prose poem "Le Rêve d'un curieux": "toute la nuit / comme / sur le point de mourir / sans / que ma mort appartienne alors / davantage / que la clareté / venue / de la nuit blanche / n'a / appartenu à la nuit" [all night / as though / on the point of dying / without my death belonging then / more / than the light / born of / the sleepless night / belonged to the night]. André du Bouchet, *Ici en deux* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), np.

37. André du Bouchet, "Tal Coat," *Derrière le miroir* 64 (April 1954): np.

38. André du Bouchet and Jacques Dupin, "A qui sinon à toi?" *Cahiers GLM* 4 (fall 1956): 16. This issue of the *Cahiers GLM* contains Yves Bonnefoy's "Menaces du témoin" and "Le Sable est au début"; Jacques Dupin's "La Superstition," "Art poétique," "Le Cœur par défaut," and "L'Urne"; and André du Bouchet's "Du bord de la faux" and his translation of Hölderlin's "In lieblicher Bläue." During one of our conversations Jacques Dupin indicated that the title "A qui sinon à toi?" was proposed by du Bouchet with reference to Hölderlin.

39. Ibid.

40. Depreux, *La Parole traversée*, 91; 90.

41. "Sous les pavés, la plage" was published in the summer 1968 edition of *L'Ephémère*, which included Jacques Dupin's "L'Irréversible" and Louis-René des Forêts' "Notes éparses en mai." Du Bouchet's full title reads "Sous les pavés, la plage [Notes du mai 1968]" with an extra space before the word "mai," which leaves the specific date of the event undetermined and points to the poem as both born of a specific event and in reserve before this event. During our conversation (June 1998), André du Bouchet insisted on the circumstantial nature of "Sous les pavés, la plage," stating that he would not call it a poem.

42. André du Bouchet, "Le Second Silence de Boris Pasternak," *Critique* 141 (February 1959): 103.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Dupin, *Monde de l'art*, 3.

45. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 60.

46. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La Poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986), 33.

47. Ibid., 33–34. In light of this analysis, Henri Meschonnic's suggestion that in du Bouchet's poetry "un rien à dire s'accumule dans le dire rien" [a nothing to say grows into saying nothing] engages in little more than insufficiently critical polemics. Henri Meschonnic, "On appelle cela traduire Celan," in *Pour la poétique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1973), 388.

48. Du Bouchet also relates this "parole" to Denis Diderot, whom he cited during his conference ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui": "I consider certain words, written or said, to be like a hole that suddenly pierces through my door, through which I see the whole interior of the apartment, like a beam that suddenly lights the depths of a cavern and is then extinguished" (166).

49. Hölderlin, *Selected Poems*, 261.

50. Mallarmé, *Œuvres*, 32. In *Ou le soleil*, published in *Dans la chaleur vacante*, du Bouchet refers to "blue asphalt" (133). It was in "L'Azur" that Mallarmé asked that the allegory of "Ennui" fill in "Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux" [The big blue holes spitefully made by the birds] (32).

51. Hölderlin writes: "Ein Zeichen sind wir deutungslos," which du Bouchet translates in the margins as "Un signe . . . privé de sens" [A sign . . . deprived of meaning] (159).

52. In response to Cassandra's exclamation, "Yet I know how to speak the language of Greece," in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui," du Bouchet notes that the

social voice of the *chorus* responds: "Les Oracles du Soleil, eux aussi, et obscurs cependant" [The Oracles of the Sun, they too, and nevertheless obscure] (160–61).

53. Heidegger, *Poetry*, 229.

54. Many of du Bouchet's texts include this form of notation in the margins. Further study of this typographical layout would need to consider the same form of marginal notation in Francis Ponge's writings.

55. Consider also Baudelaire's "Correspondances": "parfums . . . verts comme des prairies" [perfumes . . . green as prairies] (11).

56. In the left margin of "Sous le linteau en forme de joug," published in *L'Incohérence*, du Bouchet writes: "percevoir, une fraction de temps, ce qui s'oublie . . . (ma bouche est pleine de bleu) . . . bleu de labiale à labiale joignant et disjoignant" [to perceive, for a fraction of time, what is forgotten . . . (my mouth is full of blue) . . . blue from labial to labial joining and disjoining] (np). Further on, in the right margin: "bleu sur bleu, entre les lèvres le bleu qui profère" [blue on blue, betwen the lips the blue that proffers] (np).

57. André du Bouchet *Qui n'est pas tourné vers nous* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1972), 13; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

58. In *Alberto Giacometti: Textes pour une approche*, Jacques Dupin wrote of Giacometti what can also be said of André du Bouchet, that he is "drawn by the vertigo of the white page, which is to say unlimited space. But one must draw because the sheet is blank, which is nothing, neither white, nor emptiness, nor space" (32).

59. André du Bouchet, radio address on France Culture (11 March 1984).

60. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 130.

61. Blanchot, *Entretien infini*, 528.

62. Giacometti, *Ecrits*,100. Giacometti's note was initially published in *L'Ephémère* 1 (1966): 102.

63. André du Bouchet, "interstice élargi jusqu'au dehors toujours l'interstice," *Pour Reverdy: Le Temps qu'il fait* (1990): 178.

64. André du Bouchet, *Peinture* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1983), 67–68.

65. André du Bouchet, *". . . désaccordée comme par la neige" et "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986"* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989), 57; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

66. Hölderlin, "L'Unique [Der Einzige]," trans. into French A. du Bouchet, *L'Ephémère* 14 (summer 1970): 134–35.

67. Mark Anderson characterizes Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of Paul Celan (in *La Poésie comme expérience*) in a way that parallels Kaddour's interpretation of André du Bouchet. He suggests that Lacoue-Labarthe transforms "Celan into the seamless exemplar for Heidegger's 'anti-humanist' subject-less, post-metaphysical philosophy." Anderson, *Impossibility of Poetry*, 15.

68. See also Jacques Dupin's poem "Inhumain," *Les Cahiers Obsidianes (Autour de Salah Stétié)* 1 (1979).

69. André du Bouchet, *Rapides* (Paris: Hachette, 1980), np.

70. I have included only the German and French versions in the text. The English translation can be found in appendix C.

71. du Bouchet, "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986," in *". . . désaccordée comme par la neige" et "Tübingen, le 22 mai 1986"*, 88; subsequent quotations from this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

72. This word remains "hutte," not "refuge" (Daive) or the more alpine "chalet" (Lacoue-Labarthe).

73. Kaddour, *Bancal*, 77.

74. S. Breton, *Qui est Paul Celan?*, 170. Stanislas Breton was referring to Hans-Georg Gadamer's "hagiography" of Martin Heidegger in "Heidegger et l'histoire de la philosophie," *Cahier de l'Herne* 45 (1983): 169–76.

75. This interpretation differs from Alain Badiou's suggestion that Paul Celan's poetry expresses "from within poetry, the end of the age of the poets. Celan finishes off Hölderlin." Alain Badiou, cited in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poésie, philosophie, politique," in *Politique des poètes: Pourquoi des poètes en temps de détresse*, ed. Jacques Rancière (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1992), 41.

76. As du Bouchet wrote in the poem entitled "autour du mot la neige est réunie" (1996), published in *Pourquoi si calmes*, "hors de l'humain, la langue elle-même, comme hors du chant, ou résiduelle: dans ses gisements: à chanter. elle ne l'est pas encore. / *singbarer Rest*. elle *peut* l'être. l'instant qui succède / —à chanter, provisoire, comme survie. / dans la vie / le terrible quelquefois aura eu nom survie" [outside of the human, language itself, as though outside of song, or residual: in its deposits: to sing. it is not yet. / *singbarer Rest*. it *can* be. the succeeding moment /—to sing, provisionally, as though surviving. / in life / the terrible will sometimes have had the name of surviving] (14).

77. This repetition evokes the etymology of *orchis*, which refers to the flower's own origin, and to the shape of its root.

78. Lacaue-Labarthe, *Poésie comme expérience*, 58.

79. Ponge, *Œuvres*, 591.

80. André du Bouchet, "La Poésie française. Francis Ponge: *Le Verre d'eau*," *Critique* 45 (February 1951): 182; 183.

81. For Celan the poet "escorts" his poem to its end, even though this end never emerges, through a questioning "'ouverte à jamais,' 'ne parvenant jamais à fin,' qui ne désigne que l'accès, vacance, libre étendue—nous sommes loin—dehors. Le poème, cherche à son tour, je le crois, tel lieu" ['forever open,' 'that is without end,' that indicates only the open, vacancy, the open field—we are distant—outside. The poem is also in search, I believe, of this place]. Celan, "Méridien," 16.

82. André du Bouchet, *Une tache* (Cognac: Fata Morgana, 1988), np.

83. Paul Celan, poem "Ihn Ritt die Nacht," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), 234; Michael Hamburger's translation reads: "It is, it is as though oranges hung in the privet." Paul Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 1989), 287.

84. Rimbaud, *Œuvres*, 71.

85. Celan, "Tübingen, Jänner," *Gesammelte Werke*, 2: 226.

86. In "Hercules Seghers" du Bouchet also writes: *"là je suis, je / ne suis pas là . . ."* [*there I am / I am not there*] (*Incohérence*, np), thus repeating a double structure that appears in his commentary of the final line of "In lieblicher Bläue" in ". . . Hölderlin aujourd'hui": *"Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist auch ein Leben* . . . the accent placed on *Leben*, which is the first word and the last word, the fleeting vacuity of death coming to mark midway always the very opening of what is removed from words, and which some words, as though ruptured through its center, will then say" (168).

87. Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," in *Existence and Being*, trans. D. Scott (Chicago: Henry Regvery, 1949), 282–83.

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historical place where writing and event are indissociable, and where the ontological subject is neither dissipated nor ever fully emerges from its passage through the aesthetic.

In chapter 3 Petterson examines two opposite readings of Jacques Dupin's poetry: René Char's suggestion that Dupin's poetry is averse to the notion of a poetic hero, and Jean-Pierre Richard's reading of Dupin's poetry as redemptive and "clearly ontological." By considering the influence upon Dupin of the contemporary visual artists Miró, Giacometti, Braque, and Tàpies, Petterson shows how Dupin's poetry questions the uniqueness of artistic form by incorporating graffiti-like "anonymous paraphs" that are what he calls altered and perverted discursive signs, attributable to no human signatory, and whereby poetry's *mythos* refuses to be reconciled with or subordinated to the *logos* of an ethical imperative of a Ricoeurian "uniquely unique" event.

Chapter 4 argues that André du Bouchet's poetry rejects both the notion of poetry as the expression of the "uniquely unique" and Heidegger's claim for the sacred function of poetic images as "visible inclusions of the alien." Petterson demonstrates that for du Bouchet poetry produces an unimaginable reality that is unlike Heideggerian sacralizations of a unique Other in that it celebrates its own reiterability, thus ruining the illusion of poetry as the voice of the unique. Finally, Petterson shows how du Bouchet's commentary of Paul Celan's poem "Todtnauberg" addresses humanism in a fashion that repudiates Heidegger's claim that poetry is the "foundation that supports history."

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